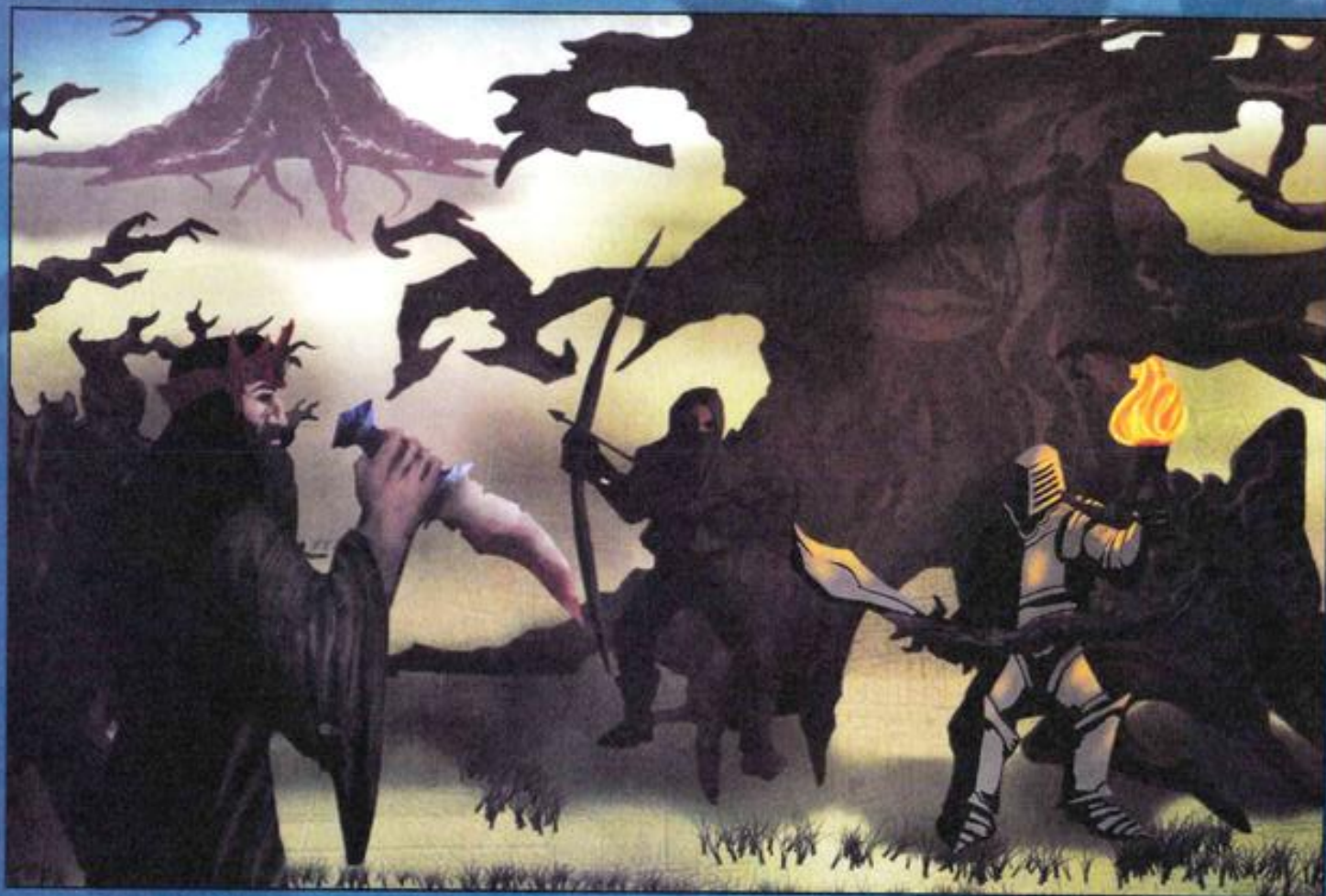


For Use With
1st Edition AD&D®

ROBERT J. KUNTZ

DARK DRUIDS

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 8-12



For use with 1st Edition Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®

Evil grows in Fang Forest! The Dark Druids commit foul atrocities, holding no respect for human, plant, or animal life. They abhor civilization, and have begun assassinating key political figures and destroying settlements. As their horrible influence expands, they have begun changing nature, distorting it to their evil ways. In doing these things, the Dark Druids threaten the very fabric of existence. Their terror must stop!



Chaotic
Henchmen
Productions



MAP KEY

	Door		Column		Wooden Building		Elemental Barrier
	Secret Door		Pillar		Embankment		Rubble
	Altar		Garden		Water		
	Sarcophagus		Tree		Stairs		

DARK DRUIDS

by Robert J. Kuntz

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 8-12



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Special Thanks to the PPP Board Members for their constant encouragement and to GT in particular who wishes to see more about this series!

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FOREWORD

This scenario was originally published as a print product for the d20 System in August 2002 by Troll Lord Games. In February 2006, Robert J. Kuntz published an expanded pdf version (with separate map files) using his Creations Unlimited system stats, which are easy to translate to TSR editions of AD&D and D&D. In July 2006, Robert published a similarly-expanded d20 pdf version. The expanded pdf versions remained available until approximately 2010 when Robert stopped selling products directly through his Pied Piper Publishing storefront. Since that time, Dark Druids has been “out of print,” although the first d20 version can still be purchased on the secondary (used) market.

I bought one of those used d20 versions a couple years ago during a local game store flea market. I read Dark Druids for the first time on my plane flight to Gary Con V in 2013, and I was struck by its imaginativeness, its concept-first design, and how it turns player expectations on their head. Dark Druids needed to get back into print! I pitched a proposal to Robert, he agreed, and I set to work...

What you now read is the fourth published version of Dark Druids — now explicitly for use with the AD&D system. It includes all new artwork, all of the expanded content from 2006 versions, plus a few additional bits & pieces, and has been re-edited and re-organized for better usability at the game table. I hope you enjoy it!

While you will find several references herein to further modules in the Dark Quest series, none of those additional modules have been published yet, as of early 2015. Thankfully this module contains many inspirational nuggets for what could have followed, plus an outline for what was planned to be the 2nd module in the series. And of course, Dark Druids can always be run as a standalone scenario. In any event, keep your eyes peeled for more modules in the Dark Quest series in the future!

— Guy Fullerton

AUTHOR SPECIAL PREFACE

Herein you will find one of the most difficult adventures that my players ever dealt with. Several PCs of that bygone campaign in the early 70's did not survive the module; at least one, a very powerful wizard played by my friend James Ward, not only had his life taken (his PC was later resurrected by the God of Luck) but his extensive holdings, treasure and magic were destroyed and he was utterly brought to ruin over his involvement with the antagonist druids and their demonic allies. No one successfully completed the scenario then, as they saw this accursed place as a trap that was best avoided for future adventure.

That they saw this as an incredibly difficult adventure only speaks for its design. The many players of that former campaign were very successful at various times in its history; they had climbed in level and stature and by degree had amassed fortunes of magic, money and land to rival those of petty kingdoms. This called for more difficult challenges, and thus Dark Druids was designed with that purpose in mind.

Whereas past adventurers had boldly ransacked and destroyed various areas populated by myself and my counterpart, E. Gary Gygax, the groups plumbng Dark Druids found different types of opponents, ones that did not make themselves readily known, those that were summoned according to prevailing circumstances and those that were aware of the party usually before the opposite was true in any case. The players over time found themselves assaulted from all sides and at all times, making it impossible to forge ahead. Indeed, they set off so many warnings and traps that the lucky, or wise, only survived by deciding that the time was not right for bulling their way forward. Whereas they did not proceed circumspectly and with stealth and planning, the module called for just that.

What you have in your hands is a rewritten version of that adventure. There have been many changes, not least of which was a decided rethinking of the reasons surrounding these druids' existence. Thus I have expanded upon the idea in ways which make it more concrete, or “realistic,” and in keeping with modern day adventures. That has also brought upon an expanded setting for the adventure, and although Dark Druids may be played as a stand-alone adventure, the details of its history, and the history of the dark druids themselves, is further explored within a series, “Dark Quest,” of which this is but the first offering.

For those who enjoy the challenges of high level play, forgotten gods, ancient secrets, and dark quests completed in deep regions of the earth, you need to look no further than this module and its companion parts, which I am about fleshing out in earnest. For those of a less fantastic bent who do not like dimly lit subterranean seas, primal terrors, worm-eaten grimoires, plots of gods and nether beings, mysterious civilizations and creatures not of the ground you're used to treading upon, then this module and its brethren may not satisfy. I can only say to those that enjoy such diversity that more is yet to flow from this author's pen concerning such matters and that fantasy is not staid and trite rehashes of Arthurian-type quests or endless sceneries filled with areas and beings we are all familiar with. I hope you enjoy this “enchanting” series as much as I enjoyed being subtly enchanted by the range of fantasy within it before and during its penning!

Robert J. Kuntz
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

USING THE MODULE

PARTY COMPOSITION AND CHALLENGES

This module is very challenging and dangerous. Though constructed for 4-6 PCs of levels 8-12, the higher of the two ranges would be acceptable considering the trials that lie before the players.

If a party of 4 attempts this, then make sure that both captured NPC rangers (explained later) are still living and add them to the party mix. Levels should definitely be the highest in the range, and types should include a ranger or thief, a fighter, cleric, and a magic-user or illusionist. A dwarf of any class is highly recommended but not necessary. A druid is a likely choice for the clerical type, but again, is not necessary. For parties totaling 7 or 8 members (the highest recommended amount), decrease separate starting levels of each PC by 1 or 2 and do not allow the NPC rangers to join in the adventure.

Allow a goodly array of magic within reason. I suggest at least one miscellaneous magical item per party member up to four, many elixirs or potions (3 each), and several scrolls of clerical or magical spells, totaling no more than 12 different spells, levels 3-5. This is in addition to magical weaponry and armor.

This quest takes the PCs into a very volatile situation wherein quick thinking and action as well as pinpoint planning and execution are required. They could find themselves pursued if they botch certain challenges or misinterpret clues. The one saving grace here is the chaotic situation that exists in the dark druids' stronghold. This allows the PCs an easier approach and entrance and additionally provides them with a situation conducive for effecting a surprise attack.

Even given these circumstances there is much in the way of puzzles to overcome, clues to interpret, chaotic encounters to avoid or defeat, and a lot of tough decisions to be made in conjunction with these and other obstacles. Timing is of the essence, as from the onset this is working against the party as they will discover by questioning the good prisoners on level #2. Sheer power and determination will help in the end, of course, but without proper steps taken beforehand, there is no chance of victory, especially if the outsider N'Threxus is successfully summoned.

PREPARATIONS BEFORE PLAY

GMs should read the module several times, especially *The Battle and the Coming of N'Threxus* (p. 5), and the *Dark Druid* variant class (Appendix F). Also make note of those encounter areas that have been earmarked by GM Note, as these are alerts to something of consequence.

READING AND INTERPRETING THE MODULE TEXT

Read-aloud Text: Sentences in italics (excluding proper magic item names and spell names, etc.) should be read aloud to the players. But note that I make some GM notations in parenthesis (like this) within read-aloud text.

New Spells: An asterisk (*) after a spell name denotes a new spell from the dark druid variant class. These are explained in Appendix G.

PLAYER INTRODUCTION

Your group of adventurers are called before a meeting of the good religions in this region; there is something big afoot, and as you seat yourselves within the opulent speaking chambers, many priests, in turn, stand to speak about what they believe to be a rise of evil so potent and deadly that it threatens civilization as you now know it.

As you listen, you gather these facts:

The good priests of the region are in this uproar due to the deaths of many good citizens and the rise of evil in the area that has accompanied this.

Through divination they have learned of a growing evil in Fang Forest, an evil that does not distinguish between humans, plant life, or animal life while committing its foul atrocities. This group is called, for lack of a better term, the "dark druids," and their members are inimical to all life. Their philosophy is simply this: The advance of civilization threatens the future of nature and all that reside within it. In order to forestall and destroy the invaders, the dark druids have resorted to assassinating key political figures and to destroying any human or demi-human settlement that immediately encroaches upon the wilderness. Their plan is to make that noose tighter, eventually bringing the battle to major population centers. To help with this plan, they have been changing nature, distorting it to their evil ways, with the hope that this will deter and eventually stop such migrations. In doing these things, they threaten the fabric of existence. Their terror must stop!

To drive home their point, one of the assembled priests, Bagrand, steps up to a curtained-off cage and raises the veil. There is mostly silent reaction amid several well-timed gasps, to what is seen within it.



It is a dog, or what once was a dog, for it now cowers, its three heads – two dependent on the central, and loose, like dead weight – struggling to look at the assembled humans. The thing snarls and yaps with fear. Its entire body is hairless and covered over with warts. The good priest replaces the veil and turns to his rapt audience.

"This was once the Garrold family dog. It had disappeared into the wild, as dogs often do, to hunt. Upon returning home, it killed two children and besieged the house. Luckily, I was on my rounds, and on my way in that fateful hour to the Garrold family to visit with them, as they are a household that does not always get the proper inspirational words being so far removed geographically from such teachings."

"Needless to say, I called upon all that is righteous to subdue this monster once it became apparent from shouts and cries from within the house that something was direly amiss. And another of its kind, perhaps too scared to advance nearer than the shadow of the nearby woods, retreated at that time. The next day two rangers from west Narlewood arrived and began tracking this other one; and they have brought more news to us due to this event than what we barely realized was afoot before."

The priest seems to stagger for a moment and then sits. "The whole of it is related in a report brought back by the ranger Fenelorth, brother of Denej, whom he accompanied. As Fenelorth is yet seeking his brother in Fang Forest, I will read his report and make additional remarks where needed."

The priest carefully unrolls a scroll and begins reading:

"To Bagrand of the Silver Council: Our assessment of the evil you fear is near complete. Having tracked the beast for some time, we did lose it, but only after discovering signs more dire than we had expected. The entirety of Fang Forest is enveloped with a blight of a nature unknown to us. Trees have withered or are distorted in shape, animals lurk everywhere, and it seems that even those once gentle of their kind have had their natures changed for the worse. The ground itself seems wracked by a putridity that makes it infertile. We have been attacked by marauding wolves, whose activity within these woods is well known and, of course, are the reason for the forest's name. But, these are now much like the beast you subdued, misbegotten things filled with rage, horrible to behold and fearless, not of the type which previously found no boldness in the face of iron or fire. My brother will continue investigating southward, as the blight seems more potent there. Though against my wishes he has ordered me to return this message to the council and with it a sketch of the area we have investigated. — Fenelorth

P.S. Upon reaching the village of Hillock, I have entrusted this message to the acolyte, Thespus, who will deliver it to you. I return to Fang Forest to seek my brother, who is now a day late behind me in arriving. — F."

There are many murmurs from the elders, and finally Bagrand stands again and says, "Action needs to be swift and decisive. Our eldest has returned from the Oracle of the Mount, many leagues north of here, and he brings with him a riddle which points to our solution: 'Seek these dark ones, and by their hand, by their own black arts, shall they be defeated.'"

There is silence as these words are contemplated; then you realize that many of the priests are looking at you.

Bagrand says, "Here are gathered many strong fighters and other men of repute in their chosen fields. Will you help stem the tide of evil, to save your own civilization? Let the strong stand forth! Let divine steel and spell prevail!"

The council speaks as one voice, while still looking at you, "Steel and Spell!"



REWARDS AND ADDITIONAL PARTY RESOURCES

The PCs are taken to a secret chamber where they are made an offer: In exchange for exterminating the dark druids, they will each receive property valued at no more than 20,000 gold coins, a knighthood, and a sum of 5,000 gold coins. Any money or magic found during the expedition which is not ascertained to be "the realm's" or known "personal" property of those victimized by the dark druids may be kept by the party – all remaining property must be returned to the council for redistribution to the rightful owners.

If the PCs accept this offer they are given the following additional information and assistance:

- A map detailing Fang Forest as supplied by the rangers is given to them. This essentially allows the PCs to travel unmolested to area 1 on the outdoor map, which is where the adventure to enter the dark druids' stronghold starts.
- The party is given supplies enough to last in the wilderness for 2 weeks without recourse to hunting or foraging.
- All information as detailed in the Player Introduction section is supplied, in transcript, along with these additional facts:

A. The dark druid base of operations is unknown. Speculation places one possible location in the Fang Forest, southern region.

B. It is thought that the dark druids have also been taking prisoners for unknown reasons; if any of these are found, they should be released and sent home. It is left up to the judgment of the PCs to adduce whether these actions would jeopardize the mission and to proceed accordingly.

C. Attacks against civilized areas have slowed over the past week. The council feels that this inactivity may be a prelude to a major attack.

D. The magic and powers wielded by the dark druids are wild and chaotic; the council urges the PCs to be prepared for situations that could escalate from any direction and in ways uncommon to currently available magical or divine applications.

E. It is also feared that a great power – an outsider, perhaps, and previously unknown or subsisting in guise – may be at the root of this evil. The dark druids were known about but seemingly inactive until several months ago. Their recent attacks and extravagant displays of magical spells indicate a greater organization and power base than the council at first believed they had available. The council encourages the PCs to be attentive to signs indicating anything beyond the normal and to study these when possible to deduce clues that could lead to discovering the nature of this power.

F. They are instructed to take prisoners for questioning, when possible. However, this special assignment needs to be kept secret until the party has effectively placed itself to strike a decisive blow; in consideration of this, "disposing" of a prisoner after interrogation is left up to the judgment of the PCs depending on their current situation. The priesthood has granted the party special dispensation to act in the best interests of the mission as this is an extreme circumstance, but this is not to be abused!

G. If the two rangers are found, the party is instructed to combine forces with them in order to act as one unit. If the rangers decide not to remain with the party, the PCs should instruct them to report to the council before returning to Narlewood.

NOTES FOR THE GAME MASTER

HANDLING THE RANGER NPCs

For this module, the ranger Denej has already been sacrificed to N'Threxus when the PCs encounter his brother, Fencelorth (area 32). However, this doesn't stop GMs from changing the story line slightly and thus having both rangers available for play, especially if the party has been having a rough time of it!

The rangers will take a secondary position to the party in deciding all important matters. However, the rangers are not obligated to the party as they are acting for the council in matters concerning reconnaissance only. Note loyalty scores for this, treating the rangers as henchmen, but make the loyalty check daily. The rangers wish to return home to warn their kindred of the imminent danger. This personal agenda gives a -10% penalty to loyalty checks. The situation may be deemed too dangerous by them depending on the prevailing circumstance (50%-75% chance in normal to extreme cases), thus adding a -5% to -15%. If recognizable headway has been made with the quest (GMs must adjudicate this), count this as a +5%. If N'Threxus is summoned, or if the party is reduced to 50% of its members, they abandon the quest immediately and retreat from the dungeons without recourse to argument or discussion regarding the matter. The rangers are brothers, so if the enemy kills either, the other seeks blood revenge against the dark druids and will thereafter cooperate fully with the party with no loyalty checks required.



THE BATTLE AND THE COMING OF N'THREXUS — BACKSTORY AND EVENTS IN MOTION

The dark druids maintain their base in the Fang Forest. However, there has recently been a division amongst the sect, and there are now two sects occurring from that: The Black Hat sect and the Umber Eye sect. Due to this split, a battle now rages inside the stronghold for its control. The Umber Eyes retain the advantage as the adventurers near the place, and are indeed attempting to summon their master, N'Threxus, to vanquish the remaining Black Hats who are holed up on level #3. In order to accomplish this act, however, they must maintain control of the "Gulf," a sacred pit at which all summonings and sendings are accomplished. The fiercest fighting between the two sects has been for the control of this very spot.

Thus, the lull that the council has noted is due to this infighting; and this bodes well for the adventurers as they attempt to enter this place. However, the outside area is in fact guarded very strongly by the Umber Eye druids; they have sealed the entrance and currently await opposition forces as these return. There have been numerous failed attempts by the Black Hats outside the stronghold to dislodge the Umber Eyes from the entrance/approach.

The inside upper levels are less guarded, as the Umber Eyes have concentrated their remaining forces on the lower levels; and the Black Hats have no extra forces to spare for such a purpose. Thus the first level is somewhat (though not wholly) unguarded. There are many clues and areas that the party should investigate there in order to proceed with the adventure and to establish a real sense of what is actually occurring here.

The Umber Eye sect will eventually gain the upper hand if the main defenders in and around area 42 are eliminated or otherwise neutralized. This will allow them to summon their master, a demon lord of great power by the name of N'Threxus. This lord will then establish a gate and summon more demons to squash all resistance. The remaining Black Hats will flee at this point or die fighting.

Thus time works against the party. And as a GM you must decide upon what course is best for ascertaining the time that the defending Black Hats are defeated, for this will certainly happen as their numbers are now few. Here are some recommendations:

A. Play out the actual battles in advance and note how long it takes. Mark this time and add another 6 hours for preparing the ritual of summoning and for completing it. This then equals the actual **full time** that the party has to complete its real mission.

B. Arbitrarily set a time when this will happen and stick to it. This is the weighted method, as the Black Hats will eventually be defeated. A recommended span is 10-20 hours.

C. Set a percentage chance of this happening for every X amount of hours after the party enters the dungeons, and then increase the percentages for each successive roll. Example: After 8 hours spent within the dungeon, there is a 25% chance; after 16 hours a 50% chance, and so forth.

Don't outdo the adventurers through the demon lord making an appearance too soon. Read the descriptions for areas 26 and 58; if these are eliminated by the players, and they will receive a hint to their existence by the good prisoners on level #2, then the summoning will be postponed, but this also gives away the PC's hand and while they are still about their main mission! But this would certainly eliminate a great number of Umber Eyes and squash a volatile situation, making their future plans and struggles less arduous.

In GMing this adventure keep in mind that both factions of evil druids are desperate fanatics who will not surrender and will, when cornered, fight to the death. There is no hope for prisoners, as these will soon be sacrificed to their "gods" at preordained times. In all, the situation is chaotically fluid and extremely dangerous.

OUTDOOR MAP



STARTING THE MISSION

After the PCs equip and otherwise ready themselves, they then set out for that area of Fang Forest as marked on the map provided by the rangers Fenelorth and Denej. The trip is nondescript for the first day and a half, but thereafter, as the party pushes further south into the forest's depths, what their counterparts reported becomes strikingly apparent:

Your environment changes suddenly; just ahead of you the forest mists congeal, partially obscuring a line of decayed trees and the remains of shrubbery and underbrush, though these are barely recognizable from their bare and shriveled forms. Once plentiful animals noted just miles beforehand give way to occasional glimpses of things which move silently in the haze, sometimes matching your step, but never giving any other sign to their locations. A definite feeling of depredation and fear seizes you. You spit out the stale, putrid air that burns in your throats and befouls your nostrils. You have stepped from the land of the living into the realm of the accursed!

This scene repeats itself in many dreary forms until the PCs reach area 1 a day later.

KEY TO THE OUTDOOR MAP

General Notes: The Black Hat druids have recently lost a battle against the Umber Eye sect for control of the outside area. The place is being watched by the Umber Eyes, their cohorts, and demons that they have summoned.

This will be the party's first test and a big one at that. No one can enter the stronghold without using the *dark horn* (see area 3), as a magical gate at area 7 prevents this.

1. DIRT PATH EAST

You arrive before a semi-cleared valley. To the southwest can be seen the many trees outlining an extensive portion of Fang Forest. To the south a ridgeline looms, dotted with trees, and beyond this is haze and more decayed land. A footpath trails off to the east and then turns south between a low-lying hill on its west and a large smattering of woods on its east. The overall look of the terrain is blasted and forlorn, with scattered pockets of mist and a smell in the air akin to that of sulphur. There is no life apparent anywhere.

The dark heart at area 2 will spy the PCs if they stay on the path or cross the low hill. It remains stationary but will attack the PCs as they near its position (read that encounter).

2. ATTACK OF THE DARK HEART

Upon the PCs reaching this point on the path between the small hill to the west and the nearby woods, the dark heart therein attacks. It charges out of the woods while animating two other trees. These trees will be 2 rounds behind the dark heart as it melees the party.

You note that one of the trees is moving out of the woods and towards you. It appears to be a treant!

Upon closer inspection (when it comes to within 30 yards or less) the party notes its horrible visage:

You note that the treant's mouth is agape and twisted with rage! It raises its branches in a deadly gesture and charges towards your ranks!

This "treant" is a dark heart, an animated tree imbued with a spirit of malignant evil. It was recently summoned by a Black Hat druid who was immediately killed by it.

Dark Heart – SZ L; AC 0; MV 12"; HD 12; hp 60 each; #AT 2; THAC0 9; Dmg 4d6; SD fire vulnerability; AL CE; XP 3810; MM p. 96 (modified treant).

Animated Trees (2): As above, except MV 3".



3. MARSHALING AREA

If the PCs investigate the area from which the dark heart came, read the following:

These woods are still partially alive, with signs that humans have recently been here. There is equipment scattered everywhere about a makeshift campsite. A dark-cloaked human body lies before a tree carved with many signs and sigils. From a distance you can make out vague human features even though the body has obviously been twisted by some pulverizing force. There are remnants of belongings near it including a black dagger stuck into the base of the tree.

As noted, the druid was killed upon summoning the dark heart (see the dark heart® spell in Appendix G for particulars).

The area was recently used as a marshaling area for attacks against the ridge (area 4) and the hidden thresher demon there. The attacks have been fruitless, resulting in the death of two Black Hat druids and the dark hearts that they summoned. Before committing themselves to attacking the demon of the ridge the two druids scrawled their names and victory symbols into the tree. Their fellow was about doing the same thing, but succumbed to the dark heart's attack, thus the dagger at the tree base.

Hidden in a small hollow inside the tree is a magical device used for opening the force pool gate at area 7: The *dark horn*, a foot-long horn carved from wood and stained black. It only affords entry if used within 20 yards of the gate, and it may only be sounded once daily. This is the only way for the party to gain access to the druidic stronghold.

The other scattered possessions are only bits and pieces of remains, including the dagger +1.



4. APPROACHING THE RIDGELINE

The path continues south towards the small ridgeline you noted earlier, passing over it and out of sight to the area beyond. The ridge appears dotted with trees, some alive, but mostly dead ones.

As the party comes to within 60' of the ridge base read the following:

You note that the path here is well worn, with many fragments of wood strewn upon it and the hillside.

These are fragments of several dark hearts that were torn to pieces by the thresher demon upon the ridge. If the PCs are wary and looking around them as they travel up the path, read the following:

You note a shredded black tunic upon the ground, maybe 20' up the ridgeline and to the east side of the path.

If the PCs do not see the tunic immediately, they may spend one turn searching the region in order to find it. However, there will be no indication as to its position.

If the party proceeds up the path or otherwise climbs this ridgeline at any point, read the following:

You head up the path (ridge); it appears to be about 60' high and curves east and southwest.

As the PCs near the tunic or top the ridge in any case, the thresher demon reveals itself and attacks.

As you near the (tunic/ridge-top) the ground erupts as if by an earthquake! Four thick roots dart forth from the ground to assail you!

The thresher demon will attack anything within 100' radius of its position on the ridge. Its roots will sense out beings that trespass; if avoided, it sends roots 50' into air for 2d4 rounds to warn any remaining allies at areas 5 and 6.

Thresher Demon – SZ L; AC 0; MV 0" (roots 12"); HD 20; hp 100; #AT 4; THACO 7; Dmg 3d6 or grab; SA automatically hits pinned targets; SD ½ damage from cold/electrical/gas/blunt/piercing/poison, 75% magic resistance; AL CE; XP 11600; Appendix E.



5. GLADE WITH ROTTED TREE

You see a glade with the remnants of a small campfire.

If the area is searched, the party notes that the campfire is less than a day old. If a PC searches for tracks, it is 75% likely that he or she will notice fresh ones leading to a nearby rotted tree, where they disappear.

There was an Umber Eye sect druid here watching earlier battles at area 4, but recently left for area 6 by way of a *transport via plants* spell. His actual outside mission was to ascertain whether primary summonings would be needed to squelch those Black Hat members as they attempted to gain control of the gate at area 7. After watching the ineffectual attacks that they've made over the past two days, he became satisfied that no further resources would be needed to guard the front gate. In fact, the two Black Hat druids who did attack are now prisoners and are being tortured at area 6.

6. SENTINELS AND TORTURE TREES

As the players come within sighting distance of this area, read the following:

There is something very strange about this area! There is a structure before you, or perhaps it isn't a structure, but a large circular agglomeration of black roots. These twist amongst each other to form a circle that disappears out of sight on its other side. You'd estimate that the structure, whether man-made or not, is roughly 8-10' high and at least 30' in radius. There are no apparent entry points into it, except perhaps from above.

If anyone attempts to gain access to this barricade from above (climbing, flying, etc.) the illusionist there, Jynex, attacks him or her with spells. If the PCs approach the structure from any direction by foot, the roots part to form a 3' wide corridor. The passage is only 7-10' deep, but the area ahead seems covered in mist, defeating attempts to see beyond it. If the PCs step through the aperture it closes again and the mist suddenly lifts, revealing two figures and the scene described hereafter.

You enter the corridor and proceed through to the other side. The mist instantly dissolves, and you are now faced by two humans, one in magical attire, the other unsheathing a sword that blazes with black flame. Behind them, suspended from two trees, are two bodies, seemingly impaled upon the trees' branches and limbs. When you enter the grove there is a gasp from the figure hanging from the left-hand tree. It is a gasp of death. As you move to act, you note that the corridor has closed behind you and that the ceiling is quickly being covered over by thick but small roots and thorns. The fight is on!

The root agglomeration is a black circle demon, which continually protects (including damage regeneration) the two humans within its circle, Jynex and Melekon, who have shared their blood with it at one of the two wooden altars within the circular barricade - stumps at the east and west sides, each of which is spotted with blood and has a blood-encrusted dagger upon it. Note the demon's description in Appendix E. PCs definitely note another presence here, but cannot see it. GM clue to be given at an opportune moment: *It's like the very place in which you fight is alive and very evil!*

Black Flameburst Sword +1 - This sword is like other longswords of this type, except if a natural "to hit" roll of 19 or 20 is scored the flame continues to burn the victim for 1d6 additional points of damage for 1d3 rounds. The fire cannot be extinguished through normal means, such as smothering or water, but can be dispelled as if it were a spell cast by a 10th-level spell caster.

Bronze Trolls - This pair of miniature bronze trolls (3" high) is similar to other wondrous figurines. When the command word is spoken (GM's option), the figurines grow to normal size whereupon they can be ordered to attack or defend. They can be used once per day for up to 1 hour. If killed, or if the command word is spoken, they return to their figurine forms.

Hood of Mental Anguish - This appears as a typical executioner's hood, except that it is placed upon the victim's head. When so placed, the victim must make a save vs. paralysis each minute in order to resist excruciating pain, causing unconsciousness 2d4 rounds later. During the time period before unconsciousness occurs the victim may be forced to reveal answers under interrogation, though this is by no means an effective way of eliciting such - the GM must evaluate each situation based upon the many inputs. This magic item seems to have been designed with the idea of torture in mind only. It may be used continually and without limit.

Torture Trees - This pair of miniature trees is hewn from ironwood. Each statuette is approximately 6" high. Inscribed on their bases is the command word for activating them (GM's option). When commanded, they grow into 12' high, leafless trees with thorny branches. If a being of 8' or less in height is placed against one of these, the tree enwraps the subject with its branches, holding him fast. The thorns pierce the victim, causing an automatic 3 points of damage per round. The victim can break the hold by making a successful bend bars roll, but this can be attempted only once per day. If the victim is brought to 0 hp or lower (unconscious or dead) while entrapped, the trees will regenerate his hp, bringing him back to life at a rate of 1 hp per round. When the victim reaches at least 50% normal hp the torture process begins anew.



Tactics: Jynex immediately summons the two *bronze trolls* (see sidebar) to defend him or attack as needed; he then uses his illusion magic to create illusions of more trolls being summoned by him. He otherwise avoids combat by using invisibility magic.

Melekon attacks without fear those closest to him. He wields his *black flameburst sword* with great agility while calling upon foul gods to smite his enemies. He comes to Jynex's aid if the need arises.

Black Circle Demon – SZ L; AC -2; MV 0"; HD 10; hp 50; #AT 0; SD ½ damage from cold/electrical/fire/gas, 30% magic resistance; AL CE; XP 2700; Appendix E. Protected allies regenerate 150 hp total, receive demon damage resistances and 15% magic resistance.

Melekon (Human Ftr 9th, Umber Eye) – SZ M; AC 2; MV 9"; hp 60; #AT 3/2; THAC0 9 (base 12); Dmg 1d8+4; SA flameburst on natural 19 or 20; SD protected by black circle demon; AL CN; S 18/57; D 16; Co 15; XP 1740. Possessions: *Black flameburst sword* +1 (see sidebar), *hood of mental anguish* (see sidebar), chain mail, large shield.

Jynex (Human Ill 8th, Umber Eye) – SZ M; AC 8; MV 12"; hp 22; #AT 1; THAC0 19; Dmg 1d4+1; SA spells; SD protected by black circle demon; AL N; I 18; D 16; XP 1264. Possessions: *Dagger* +1, two *bronze trolls* (see sidebar).

- 1st: *color spray*, *detect invisibility*, *hypnotism*, *light*
- 2nd: *blindness*, *improved phantasmal force*, *invisibility*
- 3rd: *non-detection*, *spectral force*
- 4th: *shadow monsters*

Battle Aftermath: The PCs can fully investigate the glade upon winning the battle. Two things happen immediately upon Jynex's death. The black circle demon disappears as if it never existed, leaving the PCs standing in an open glade. Also, the *torture trees* holding the two dead druids cease to function; the dead bodies are deposited on the ground. If investigated, their remaining flesh is spotty and in singular places only (a hint at the regenerative qualities of the trees), but they are mostly skeletal.

If necromancy is employed to speak with any of the skeletons, the PCs might discover the interesting fact that the druids are warring amongst themselves, and that the *dark horn* (at area 3 if not already in the PCs' possession) must be used to enter the stronghold. Their spirits might (25% chance) offer a vague clue to N'Threxus: "Beware the Lord of Blight; his hour nears." Though the PCs could use the *torture trees* to regenerate the two corpses, this would take a long time and the questioning might prove fruitless. It would also be considered an overtly evil act, notwithstanding the councils' special dispensation.

The last thing the PCs note is a small diagram of a circle (about 1' in diameter) with an even smaller rune inscribed into it. The diagram is made of stone and is magical (if this is detected for). The magical writing remains indecipherable (it is a magical code) but seems to indicate that something is received or sent through the activation of magic here, though there is no way to ascertain what that is. The diagram is easily destroyed as it is thin stone.

This is a teleportation "rune" for the Umber Eye sect – the way they have been accessing the outdoor area and thereby keeping the gate permanently closed. The druid previously at area 5 recently used this to transport to area 21. The teleporter is now useless (see area 21).

7. DARK FORCE POOL / FRONT GATE

As the party nears this area, read the following:

You note a heaped up area of earth and dug into it a trough sloping southwards and into the ground, about 20 yards wide. About 60' down this ramp you are faced with another strange sight. The southeastern wall is composed of a bubbling, vertical wall of dark water that

mirrors the outside! It's as if someone suspended a circular pool of water right before you, but there's something very unreal about this. You can see your own reflections in it, though these are distorted by the constantly churning water. This strange water wall blocks you from continuing onwards.

Sounding the *dark horn* (see area 3) within 20 yards parts this wall for 1d4+1 rounds, revealing a 10' wide passage beyond (area 8). Touching this wall repels the person doing so and paralyzes him or her (save vs. poison to avoid) for 1d3 hours. It is immune to all physical attacks and cannot be parted or bypassed in any other way. PCs using spells or powers to transport past this blockage find themselves momentarily blacked out and then awake 1d4+1 minutes later on the ground before the wall where they fainted.



KEY TO DUNGEON LEVEL #1

General Notes: The PCs enter the gate and find themselves in a rough-hewn area. The walls and floors are composed of dirt and imbedded rock, and the workmanship is crude at best. The PCs see a rough-hewn passage proceeding east-southeast and immediately take note of area 8's remains.

8. ENTRY CORRIDOR

You note what appear to be the remains of a battle – one body, abandoned weapons and the stench of death. The body's attire confirms that this person was a druid of the kind you found near the treant outdoors. Whoever killed him did so efficiently; a javelin remains lodged in his back and a short sword – perhaps his own – was used to partially sever his neck, and is still buried in it.

The walls about this entry corridor are also of interest. They are frescoed over with blacks and shades of grey used to present two separate scenes on the north and south walls respectively. Each fresco has in common with the other that of a great number of dark-robed supplicants before a large gulf or pit stretching beyond the borders of the representation, all with hands raised on high. The only difference in each is the figure in the gulf that they are summoning or worshipping. North: A storm of dark clouds spewing forth lightning and black flames; South: A many-tentacled being, similar in shape to a gigantic octopus, but slime-ridden and having an elongated head with monstrous, intelligent eyes which remain fixed upon its supplicants.

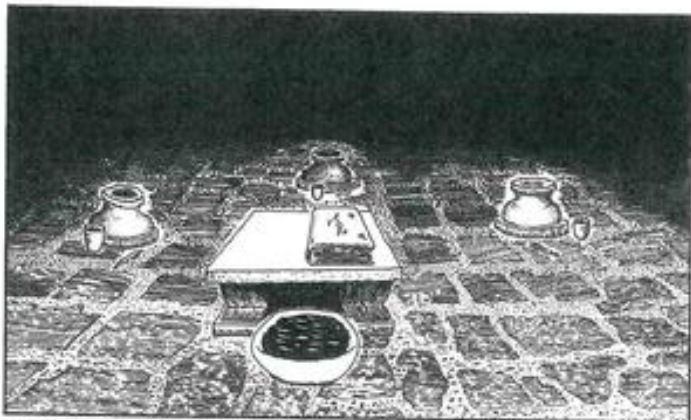
The sword and javelin are both magical – a *short sword of scathing* (see sidebar) and a *javelin* +2. The druid's body, if searched, reveals a black conical hat, squared off at the top (see "Dress" in the Black Hat Sect description in Appendix F). There is nothing else here, nor any clues as to who might have killed this person. His coagulated blood indicates that he has been dead for several days.

Short Sword of Scathing – All wounds inflicted by this +2 weapon continue to burn, as with fire, for 1 damage per round until healing magic is applied.

9. RITUAL ROOM OF PASSAGE

When the party attempts to enter this room, roll randomly to determine which ones must stay out and which one can enter. After completing the signing-ritual the signer may exit east, which allows the next single PC to enter.

You see three shallow wells arrayed in the center of this room and a book on a small podium before these. From left-to-right, the wells contain water, mud, and slime. Set before each well is a small cup and a stylus. At the foot of the podium is a shallow basin filled with black water.



If the book is read, the title "Initiates Rite of Passage," is highlighted, and the book's entry names are all signed in bluish-black ink.

You also note a parting remark made by one of the initiators: "Tis three times the faith to pass this test, three times over in its three parts." The inks all look the same while on the page – a bluish-black concoction – giving no clue to their application.

PCs note that the signatures are in three letters each, and of very large print. The middle letters in notable cases are the universal symbols for a negative, or zero, sum, a zero crossed through with a horizontal bar. These symbols indicate that some signers had no middle name and thus used a zero sum symbol instead, as this formulaic ritual requires three letters (symbols), not two.

The ink is an admixture of fluids from each well – 3 parts from each. The correct mixture/application is:

Left Well: Three parts water (forms 1st letter)
Center Well: Three parts mud (forms 2nd letter)
Right Well: Three parts slime (forms 3rd letter)

Each stylus must be used to catch 3 drops of each liquid, which are then deposited into the nearby cups. One stylus is used for each separate liquid in each well. Mixing between wells/styluses/liquids negates any chance of signing the book and the styluses must be rinsed in the basin at the podium's base (this is unhallowed water) before proceeding anew. Each stylus – in left to right order – is thereafter used to form a separate letter upon the page.

When all letters are formed, the writer becomes aware of a passage that was otherwise unseen to the east. As they exit, the west passage reopens, allowing another PC to enter. As the western passage opens, moments later the eastern passage closes. If the book is destroyed, the room is forever sealed – PCs must seek an alternate escape plan. The room works the same in reverse order/flow unless the PCs learn the command word that will open these magical portals. (The GM must make one up.)

This room is for initiates who otherwise have not been allowed into the inner circle and/or cannot transport to parts unknown within it. It also is an effective countermeasure versus intruders.

10. LARGE GALLERY

You see a very expansive room filled with bookshelves, reading areas, rugs and unlit scones. Several shelves along the north wall appear to hold curios. Set before this array is an 8' long by 3' high iron trunk.

The books are all esoteric ramblings; one curio shelf holds the only item of note: A scroll of 3 (random) clerical spells, 4th to 6th level. The remaining items are knickknacks of various metallic and wooden origins.

The trunk is magically locked and is further guarded by teleportation magic. A careful search reveals magic writing which, if deciphered, indicates two words: "send" and "mend". If broken into, the trunk teleports to an alternate location (area 12) whereat, if found, can be opened, but not without defeating the lock again, which seemingly has closed and mended itself.

The trunk's magic allows it to teleport once per day, so if it is found within 24 hours preceding its initial teleportation, it can be broken into without it disappearing again. This trunk is unique to the Black Hat sect and is invisible and undetectable by Umber Eye druids. Its weight (800 lbs. empty) limits attempts to bring it along as treasure. The PCs should be more concerned with what's inside the trunk in any case.

The PCs will find no difficulty in conquering the lock over time, but if they suggest breaking or damaging the trunk itself, the party as a whole will get a bad feeling about this course of action, as if someone or something has mentally suggested otherwise. There is no indication to the source of this telepathic communication, but if they decide against destroying the chest, they all receive good feelings about this.

When finally opened, read the following:

There is a single item within, laid upon a thick inner cushion of black velvet. At first inspection it appears to be a 4' long slightly curved spike, or perhaps even a gigantic fang. There is a break line apparent near its thicker base, perhaps caused by a force that removed it from the supposed creature that at one time bore this. It is yellowed with age, appearing to have been of a deeper golden hue at one point by the several notable unadulterated spots of gold remaining. You note immediately that it seems to reflect light to some extent – looking at it directly causes you to squint and to temporarily avert your gaze.

This is the *Tarrasque Spike*, a magical artifact of the dark druidic cult, which is fully detailed in Appendix D.

GM Note: The Dark God communicates in strange ways, and is, in fact, the source of the telepathic communication while the PCs examine the chest. It realizes that the PCs are a "random factor" in the battle which is now raging in the temple area. It wants the *Tarrasque Spike*, which was originally given by him to the original founder of this sect, Mahzrat. It needs the spike intact for secret reasons which will be revealed later. The Dark God ordered that the Black Hats hide the spike in a place where it would not be found, thus its location in this out of the way chamber. (The Umber Eye sect assumes the spike is sequestered with the remaining Black Hats on level #3.) The spike can be used at area 12 to summon and question the spirit of Mahzrat. Those wielding this spike will have its other powers and functions revealed to them by the Dark God at "appropriate" times (see Appendix D).





11. TOMB OF MAHZRAT (pronounced: moz-rot)

Upon entering this room you note a 3' high stone pillar to either side of the entrance. Each has a depiction of a face upon it with mouths open. Centered upon each mouth is a small indentation where something can be placed.

There are wards on this place, which can only be dispelled by placing a key-ring in each mouth; these key-rings can be found on the dead druid hidden in the small garden at area 15. If the key-rings are not used and the PCs subsequently enter this place, read the following:

The northerly area is comprised of four translucent sarcophagi, all placed upright with a man, woman and two children preserved therein. There is no indication to how long they've been dead other than some ornamentation on the woman, which indicates a style abandoned socially some 20 years ago, though this may be no clue at all, but merely a preference on her part for antiquated finery when she was living. Their names are inscribed on each coffin: Mahzrat for the man, Behort for the woman, and Tobin and Gafi for the children. The coffins also have many symbols and runes inscribed on their surfaces in an ancient druidic cuneiform.

The inscriptions are wards, guards and curses against those who would defile this tomb.

As you take in this scene you are immediately aware that there is another presence in the room, though you cannot see it. A foul dread overcomes your senses!

Secretly roll saves vs. magic for each PC. Those succeeding the save see one of the following scenes (roll 1d3 to determine), which repeats itself every minute that the PCs remain in this chamber without dispelling the spiritual guards upon it. Those missing their saves see all of the following three scenes.

Mind Images/Scenes

1. The form of Mahzrat comes forth from his coffin; he appears dressed in flowing black robes, is of a dark demeanor, black beard and fanatical green eyes. He points his finger at the one viewing him and admonishes them in a foreign language. Those hearing the

"admonition" (all characters in the room) must make a save vs. magic or take 3d4 damage and be struck deaf for 3d4 rounds. Those making the save take only 1d8 damage and are not deafened.

2. The children, who are both robed in red, scuttle forth. They reach within their pockets and produce various stones and rocks which they hurl at the PCs. Each rock hits its target if saves vs. spells (at -2) are not made. The children each hurl one rock/minute. PCs not affected by this scene see those who are as either dodging about or actually reacting to the hits as these are scored. Each rock deals 1d4+2 damage.

3. The white-robed woman cackles at the PCs, while always fixing her stare upon the closest opponent. The cackle causes slowness (save vs. magic or movement rate reduced by 50%) to all PCs remaining in the room, and the stare causes fear (save vs. magic or run away in flight).

These are very powerful mind illusions instigated by the guardian of the tomb. This being is an ancestral spirit who guards the family, and it calls upon spiritual forces to ward against interlopers. As long as the PCs remain in the room they are subject to these very real attacks. Disbelieving them will not dispel their nature, as they operate on a higher level within subconscious boundaries and thus the rational, conscious mind cannot extrapolate enough to shake these images off as false or unreal. Spells used to close the mind off to being influenced allow a PC a save vs. spells (as above) every round for as long as this form of protection is active. In any case, the protected PC will still be affected by at least one of the images/scenes.

Mahzrat was the de facto historical religious founder of the dark druid philosophy, tending towards the Black Hat philosophy. His tomb has very little import to this adventure outside of one non-magical item – a carving depicting a gulf with many ledges. Around it are ledges, and upon these are adherents, raising their arms high. Out of the gulf rises a double form – a shadowy storm of darkness and flame and lightning, and a many-tentacled being. Turning over and inspecting the plaque (2' long, 1' deep, and 6" wide) reveals a small compartment containing a tiny roll of paper with these words imprinted upon it:

*Below the gulf you must fly,
As a bird, down past his storm;
And then too, past his brother's arms;
To offer fire and also blood,
One to each.*

*And then in despair,
Worry not.
For the key to him is guarded,
By what you've given,
By what you must take back.*

*Confound, defeat, this next pair,
Then you will know his mind,
And share in his coldness,
A thousand frozen memories,
A thousand forgotten dreams.*

Then, a hastily scrawled postscript:

*Ever east, never elsewhere should you plumb,
Lest these be seen as acts outrageous,
And calamities befall you!*

This appears to be a precursor to a religious ritual of some sort in dealing with two "gods". The mention of the gulf is of prime consequence, as the PCs must complete their mission there (areas 65, 70 and 71).

If the PCs discover the secret door to the south, read the following:

You note a passage ahead, dusty, and smelling of sweet incense; but soon the smell shifts slightly and becomes laced with a distinct air of water.

12. SECRET CHAMBER

This is the communing chamber of Mahzrat, the former spiritual leader of the dark druids and founder of this religious sect.

You see a simple wooden pedestal set before a raised stone dais spread with incense and dried black flowers. The dais is etched with many magical symbols, several of which any cleric or mage will instantly recognize as spirit related, though many more remain indecipherable.

If read by magical means, the symbols seem to instruct the one so doing to stand upon the wooden pedestal while holding aloft something referred to only as the "unholy spike" (the *Tarrasque Spike* found at area 10).

If this is done, the PC (and only the PC) sees and hears the spirit of Mahzrat, now standing upon the dais. He may ask Mahzrat one question per turn he remains on the pedestal. The spike, though not appearing to at first weigh much, challenges the querist each round to hold onto it (see Appendix D for complete details). Though Mahzrat's spirit is contained in the spike, he has added this ritualistic stricture for communicating with his spirit, and cannot be summoned at any time or place by using the *Tarrasque Spike*, except as herein described. The PC asking the questions notes that Mahzrat's ghostly figure is always very intent upon the spike, almost cautious in his regard for its proximity.



The players can learn a general history of the dark druid cult (use details from Appendix F) by questioning Mahzrat, but he has no knowledge of current events whatsoever, though he seems amused (in a ghostly way) if the questioning reveals (from his interpretations) anything about current circumstances.

If the questioner asks about the spike itself, or about whom the dark druids worship, the players receive this riddle about the Dark God and/or the *tarrasque's* locale, though neither name is ever mentioned specifically:

*Past the twain in depths unplumbed,
Lies in sleep an evil one.*

*Wherefrom roams his spiked pet,
As often as his dreams do let,
Past yapping, snarling things which crawl,
And at its heels do wail.*

*That is where the spike did ring,
Did at last prevail.
When plucked so mightily from its hind,
A gift, a bane, his hand to mine.*

*And that where it all begins . . .
And that is where it ends . . .*

Many of the details surrounding this riddle will be realized upon completing the current quest and when the PCs come into contact with the Dark God and begin their new quest to find him and deliver back to him his "pet's" spike (see area 71).

13. BROWN BEAR CAVE

This cave contains a fierce looking brown bear; as you enter its cave it turns away from a small stream and attacks.

This thing always attacks the nearest opponent. The current High Priest, Jakust, at one time had this creature guarding the key-rings to dispel the wards at area 11, but transferred these into a servant's keeping after the sect fell to warring (see area 15 for the fate of that servant and for the location of the key-rings).

If the bear is searched, the PCs note the following:

The bear has an intricate collar inset with a large ring. The ring is empty.

The collar is made of leather inset with small iron plates (worth 40 gp).

Misbegotten Brown Bear – SZ L; AC 6; MV 15"; HD 5+5; hp 50; #AT 3; THAC0 15; Dmg 1d6/1d6/1d8+4; SA hug 2d6 damage; Mutations: razor-sharp/hardened teeth, physical stamina, unique splay form paws; AL CE; XP 675; Appendix E and MM p. 9.

14. AREA OVERVIEW

If the PCs take one of the four passages that lead south into this cavern, read the following:

You've entered a large cavernous area lit with a dull phosphorescent hue. The ceiling appears very high here, possibly 60' above, and the ground is covered with short-bladed grass. There is a faint shadow to the south created by a rise of earth there that extends west and east and out of your vision.

The phosphorescence is caused by minute fungi indigenous to this place; the rise to the south is an embankment extending east and west, as noted (see area 18).

15. SMALL GARDEN

You see a garden patch before you, small but exotic looking. There are definitely some rare varieties of plants and flowers here, no doubt tended by the druids.

There are some very strange plants here, along with a hidden corpse:

Brown Creeper – This large vine takes up most of the garden space, spreading its dun colored vines throughout it. This vine emits a low corrosive substance which over time blackens and kills grass and makes dirt infertile.

There is a dead druid (Black Hat sect, though this is not obvious) obscured beneath the brown creeper's many vines on the eastern fringe of the garden. A diligent search will reveal the body; if found, his body contains the two rings (silver with raised and detailed knobs) needed to deactivate the wards guarding Mahzrat's tomb (area 11). The body is decomposed and has nothing else of value on it.

Narpholynt (2) – These are purplish-hued flower-bearing plants that have narcotic properties. If sniffed casually, roll a save vs. spells or muse and dream for 1d4 turns. This has a mild debilitating effect on combat bonuses and anything requiring fast movement (-1 to saves against area attacks or large missiles, -1 to melee attacks, etc.). If a character actually consumes one of these flowers, he must save vs. magic or fall asleep for 1 turn (10 minutes). These plants are rare, netting 700 gp each if sold to an apothecary or herbalist.

Leper Plant – This very singular plant appears as a mass of small ovoid pods attached to smaller vine-like stems, and colored green with purplish streaks. There is a noticeable rancid smell to it, and the pods

emit a black, sappy fluid. The plant's main property is to cause a random disease to those touching the black fluid (save vs. poison to avoid the effect); the pods can also be plucked from the plant and later used to enhance *contagion** spells, increasing the potency of such (caster receives +1 "to hit" to deliver the effect, and saves against it are at -2). This plant is an unknown hybrid that could sell for as high as 5000 gp to interested parties.

Haze Plant – When this orange-colored plant is approached it senses the intruders and emits a defensive mist. The mist forms slowly and is also toxic to low-form predators (insects, small mammals), which tends to drive these off, but has no effect on larger creatures. When 10 or more of these plants generate mist as a group, a cloud of fog is generated in a 15' radius sphere (approximately 14,000 cu. ft.); those within the fog have their sight obscured for as long as they remain within it (no save).

Blood Trumpets (10) – These scarlet trumpets emit a caustic substance that burns and blackens the ground beneath them. The stamens of these flowers can be milked for their acid; 5 flowers will produce, via 5 minutes of milking, 1 bottle of acid (3d6 damage per bottle), and then are inert until regenerating, 1d3-1 days later. PCs must ascertain how to milk their stamens without damaging themselves.

16. GROVE OF DEAD TREES

You enter a grove of trees that has been recently blasted by some type of fire. The oak trees here are burned and leafless, and there are some remains of bodies near these.

The human remains are of the master of the grove and his assistant – these are burnt beyond recognition. The only remaining item of worth is buried beneath the carbonized remains: *dagger +3, +6 vs. animals.*

17. ALTAR OF TENTACLES

You espy a grove of strange mushrooms, though these are gigantic specimens standing a full 10' high each. Amongst these, closer to the north side of this grove, is a stone altar.

If the PCs examine the grove more closely, read the following:

The mushroom trees seem to have been altered; their bark is scored in places and there are obvious un-plantlike growths upon these. In fact, these growths appear to be that of some scaled creature or monster.

These eight trees are sentient misbegotten mushrooms which have been changed to provide their pieces to summon the tentamorts from the stone altar. Each has, at this time, one growth/scab upon it. The scabs are produced by fluid extracted from summoned creatures and implanted in the stalks; these then produce growths (the scabs) which are magical, and if surgically removed and placed on the altar, these transform into tentamorts. The formula/procedure for reproducing more scabs is not apparent. Usually, there are three Black Hat sect druids in attendance here, pruning the trees and growing the tentamorts for release outdoors, but these have either retreated or have been slain.

If the PCs investigate the altar:

The altar appears made of common stone. There is a bas-relief of huge amorphous head with a beak and tentacles engraved upon it.

If the PCs remove a scab from the mushroom tree (this is easily accomplished in 1d10 rounds) and place it upon the altar, a tentamort is summoned. The tentamort will faithfully obey its summoner until it is itself destroyed or its summoner orders it hence.

Tentamort – SZ S; AC 3 (tentacles) or 1 (body); MV 1"; HD 2 (each tentacle) and 4 (body); hp 10 (each tentacle) and 20 (body); #AT 2; THAC0 16; Dmg 1d6/1d6; SA constriction, paralyzation, saliva; AL N; XP 715; FF p. 86.

18. EARTHEN EMBANKMENT

You approach the embankment which you noted earlier. There is a stream trickling down its side here and trailing off to the northeast. The embankment rises about 10' above you. The grade is not sharp, and you could easily walk up it.

At the foot of the embankment within the stream is a clue to the monstrosity at area 20. Any search of the area will reveal it; there is a 50% chance the PCs will find it without even looking for it:

You find a large scale. Its size suggests a gargantuan fish or other amphibian creature!

The scale was shed by a giant aboleth, and over time was moved by the stream's current to this spot.

19. WOODEN BUILDINGS

You note a small grouping of wooden buildings obliterated by fire. Centered near these is an odd sight: A large black oak tree encased in a gelatinous substance. It appears that the fire which destroyed the buildings had no effect upon the jelly-like matter. As you further inspect it, the tree's branches appear to move and flow within the jelly, as if by a faint wind, though there is no wind apparent, and no way physically if it were, that the wind could penetrate the casing to cause such movement!

The buildings were once used to house many Black Hat sect druids, who tended the oak, the aboleth pond (area 20) and other areas of this level. They are now in ruin and reveal nothing by their design or of their former occupants.

Black Oak Tree: The jelly solution surrounding this tree is akin to that making up a gelatinous cube, but it is non-sentient. If touched, it does damage as a huge gelatinous cube, though this particular cube remains stationary (Speed 0"). The tree seems immune to the stuff, and possibly, upon closer study, actually might be emitting this strange substance. If the base of the tree is inspected, strange runes of warding and containment are noted. These are symbolic only, having no real power, but are merely entreats to the gods to protect the tree. A druid or any other character familiar with their runes will discover this odd fact.

The tree is an icon for the dark druids of both sects. When this cult originally formed, it took great measures to protect their symbol – then the black oak – by encasing it in this special protective substance. Since then the tree has grown to reproduce this substance, forming a symbiotic link with the jelly.



20. GREEN POND

You see a small pond of greenish water. An algae-like substance covers the banks making the area 10' before them slippery.

This pond is not what it seems; its shelves extend outward for 100' radius upon breaking 30' in depth, and the depth at its center is undiscovered, but continues downward past 200'. A PC who moves upon the algae has a 50% chance of slipping (modified for high or low dexterity at the GM's discretion). Slipping only has a 10% chance of depositing the PC into the pond, unless he was specifically close to its lip, then the chance of falling into it increases to 25%.

Approaching the pond on its east/southeast side may (50% chance) reveal footsteps leading up to it, and identical, but wet, footsteps then leading away, both seemingly from/to area 21 (read that if the PCs are close enough to note it). PCs coming within 20' of the pond on this side also note a black coloring to the water not previously apparent from other vantage points.

Lurking in this pond is a giant aboleth – part subterranean monstrosity, part mutated being due to the special serums that have been fed to it. It instantly becomes aware of intruders, and attacks with its listed abilities when the PCs come within its range, which may include any attempt by them to enter area 21. The aboleth recently destroyed an Umber Eye druid who teleported from area 6. The blackness in the pond is caused by the aboleth's recent release of mucus.

Though the aboleth detests land creatures, it has a strange fixation with the Black Hat sect due to its intimate knowledge of the Dark God, whom it respects. It will let members of that sect treat with it 80% of the time. However, ever since the "traitorous others" – the Umber Eyes – attacked the Black Hats, the aboleth has become incensed with destroying as many of the former as possible. Thus any being not part of the Black Hat sect is immediately attacked upon nearing the aboleth's lair.

Aboleth – SZ L; AC 4; MV 3"/18"; HD 8; hp 100; #AT 4; THAC0 12; Dmg 1d6 + skin transformation (x4); SA illusions, ensnare; SD mucus; AL LE; XP 2275; MM2 p. 8.

This aboleth has been fed algae coated with a magical serum derived from the dark druids' experiments with plant and animal mutations; this has given it twice its normal hp.



21. BROKEN RUNE CIRCLE

You note a 10' round circle composed of inlaid stones approximately 6" square each. All are inset into the ground before a small crevice to the east. The crevice appears to be no wider than one person could fit through; but in order to get to it you would have to navigate the circle, crossing it at some point. To your dismay, you note that the stones all have indecipherable runes carved upon their faces.

Roll 1d10 for every minute that the PCs remain here. A 1-6 indicates that the aboleth at area 20 has sensed them and will attack, as it does not recognize them as part of the Black Hat sect. It will not attack the current conveyor of the "spike" (if the party has it at this point), as it senses something in it dimly akin to the Dark God.

Searching the area reveals the following:

You note that one of the stones is cracked, with a major part missing. You also note footsteps leading from the circle towards the pond to the west/southwest and returning to the circle, then leading from there into the crevice. Another mystery!

The Umber Eye druid who had recently teleported here was in fact dominated by the aboleth as soon as he arrived. He was then ordered into the pool where the aboleth released its mucus cloud, effecting the breathing change in the druid. The druid was then ordered out of the pool to break the rune circle, which the aboleth knew was being used by the Umber Eye sect against his allies, the Black Hats – hence the footprints leading to/from the pool and the partially destroyed section of stone. The druid started suffocating before finishing his work and stumbled into area 22, where he died.

The circle no longer functions as a teleportation device, as the druid's handiwork was sufficient enough to ruin its power. The runes are identical to the one discovered at its terminus (area 6). The circle may be passed through without other worries or precautions. It radiates only faint traces of impotent magic if this is detected for.

22. LARGE ROOM WITH BODY

The crevice soon expands to allow you to walk two abreast. You are on the verge of a very large cavernous area lit by the same strange phosphorescence common to the rest of the level. The room could have been at one time a barracks or storage area, as there are wooden remains and even a few shelves along the northern wall, and a few remaining cots. The most interesting feature about this area, however, is a body face down upon the floor near its center point!

This is the body of Beleg, the Umber Eye druid who succumbed to the aboleth's attacks (see above). If his body is checked, read the following:

You note that the druid seems to have suffocated; his hands are still clutching his throat in an apparent death grip and his face is a dull purple color. You also find an intricately carved bone scroll tube underneath his body.

The scroll tube is worth 60 gp for its silver inlay. Inside the tube is a scroll with a hastily scrawled message in the common script:

"B —

After dispensing with our assessment of the outer defenses, return to the main Urn Chamber to become attuned by Alzet. Proceed to assist him with his efforts. I will dispatch someone to relieve you in the regular cycle.

Victory is near! Hya! N'Threxus!

— Hesmat"

The druid's only other possessions are his robes and a regular dagger. His hat was lost in the aboleth pool.

23. SPIRAL STEPS DOWN / DEFACED FREScoes

You note a set of stairs spiraling down to the south. To either side of the stairs upon the walls here are the same frescoes you noted upon entering this level through the dark water gate. However, the frescoes are both defaced with blood spelling out the name N'Threxus.

The party may proceed down the stairs to level #2, area 24.



KEY TO DUNGEON LEVEL #2

General Notes: This level contains several large rooms. The immediate surroundings appear newer compared to the preceding areas the party has been in, and the walls and floors are of worked stone. There are no light sources here.

The PCs can accomplish two specific goals here. First, by questioning Fenelorth and his other inmates (area 32), they can learn of the sacrifices being made to summon a great outsider as well as learn first hand of the schism that exists between the two warring druidic sects. Secondly, if they defeat area 26's occupants and neutralize the magical urn there, the summoning of N'Threxus will be forestalled for several more hours as the Black Hat sect will be able to concentrate their resources to defending against attacks from one direction only. These two most important encounters can win the party time and valuable information, as well as another hand in battle (the ranger Fenelorth).

A1 - A4, SLANTING CORRIDORS

Near each corner of the map is a corridor which slants down to an outlet on level #3. These corridors continue making sharp turns for approximately 500' each before culminating at their respective points on that level.

24. SPIRAL STAIRS OUTLET

You note a wide-open area of smooth-hewn features. There is a great stench of death here, and as you step off the stairs you start to notice bodies and equipment, littered in such a manner before you as to suggest a recent battle. As you pause to take this in, you hear the distinct, yet muffled or distant, sounds of chanting, though you cannot ascertain its location relative to your position.

There is no light on this level, so the party must opt to either strike a light or not.

If they linger for more than 1d3-1 rounds near the staircase, they will note something to the east:

As you pause, a shimmering wall seems to ignite in the darkness to your east and north. As you strain to watch, the wall parts, and multiple large figures dart through the gap, then proceed in a northerly direction. The wall closes and the light dissipates, again leaving you looking upon darkness.

The wall is area 25. The figures are dark power elementals, summoned by UMBER Eye sect druids in area 26 (see that area for stats, if necessary); these are dispatched to level #3, area 42 to assault the opposing sect's defenses there. This recurs every 12 minutes.

25. ELEMENTAL BARRIER

You arrive before a strange wall of scintillating colors, with the overall major color being red. The area about you feels warmer. This is indeed the wall that you saw earlier. Its 10' width and 20' height cover an obvious passageway east.

This barrier was created and is maintained here by the *Urn of Elemental Darkness* (described later), an artifact which accomplishes this with the constant focus of a dark druid, Rhengest, at area 26. The apparent heat felt by the party is in fact emanating from the barrier. This gives an immediate clue to its nature.

Attacking the barrier immediately alerts Rhengest, who is at this time concentrating on summoning more air elementals; he immediately awakens his superior, Alzet, who is currently sleeping in order to rest for his shift at the urn. Both druids are thereafter prepared for any entry through the barrier if it should fall. Upon defeating/passing the barrier the PCs may enter area 26.

Rhengest parts the elemental barrier every 12 minutes to allow a new set of air elementals to exit. If the players time this correctly, they may enter the room through the barrier. Elementals departing the room will stop if confronted in their exit from it; though they do not immediately attack, this alerts Rhengest and they are thereafter ordered to combat the intruders. See area 26 for air elemental stats, if necessary.

Flat/Planar Elemental Barrier (red, orange and yellow coloration)

Primary Effect: Fire element inflicts 3d6 fire damage if touched or successfully struck in melee.

AC -4; hp 69; SD immune to fire and heat, burns missiles; see p. 18.



26. SUMMONING CHAMBER

GM Note: This area is a very dangerous and complex encounter. GMs should carefully read it, as well as the description of the *Urn of Elemental Darkness* afterward. Many of the details here rely on proper understanding of the artifact's powers.

You are confronted by two Umber Eye sect druids in the motion of casting spells. The druid furthest from you to the northeast appears to be working some magic at an altar there. The altar has a large brass urn set atop it. The battle is joined at last!

Timing/Area Considerations: Rhengest is currently in combat mode with the urn's powers. He is maintaining 2 separate barriers (areas 25 and 29) and a set of air elementals which he just sent to level #3, area 42. He has currently timed the elementals' arrival at their objective points (and eventual death) as being 10 minutes. He waits to lose contact with them before summoning and dispatching another pair.

Impending Urn Intelligence Check: Three minutes after the PCs arrive, Rhengest must make another intelligence check to maintain the urn's existence on this plane. It will be at a +3 total bonus to his intelligence score (+5 from the urn ring, -1 for a pair of summoned elementals, and -1 for two elemental barriers), unless he summons further powers from it, or dispels others.

Druids' Strategy: Both druids are concerned with maintaining the urn on the current plane without recourse to re-summoning it, which they cannot do, as their High Priest, Hesmat, is the only one who knows of its location through information imparted to him by N'Threxus. If the urn is forced from this plane, the elemental attacks against their enemies on level #3 cease, putting even greater pressure upon Hesmat to remain there to help with that ongoing battle. Once gone, the urn is effectively removed as a force from the battle. Thus Alzet and Rhengest will immediately attempt to kill all intruders, using their best spells, or powers summoned from the urn, to do so.

Alzet's Tactics: Alzet immediately disengages from ground combat by levitating (with his boots), and then rains down his best spells upon the party. He summons creatures to combat the PCs, and while they are so engaged, targets single PCs or isolated groups with his most potent attack spells. He will attempt at all times to interpose summoned creatures between the attackers and Rhengest, as he fears that Rhengest will lose concentration on the urn if attacked. Fearing his own demise at the hands of Hesmat should he fail, Alzet fights to the death, using every stratagem he can muster to win this battle and thus keep the urn present upon this plane. If the urn is sent back to its original plane, Alzet will either flee for his life from these dungeons (50% chance) or will escape to reluctantly inform Hesmat about the PCs.

Rhengest's Tactics: Rhengest immediately summons two 8 HD air elementals from the urn to combat intruders. He maintains a direct front to his attackers, avoiding damage whenever possible (*wall of thorns*, *wall of smoke**, and his *potion of invisibility* may prove useful in this regard). Note that he cannot move more than 4' away from the urn/altar without breaking the spell which keeps the urn on this plane. This does not bode well for him and he knows that. His best strategy is summoning creatures with spells and from the urn (air elementals), to slow the attackers down with constant melee, allowing Alzet to dispatch PCs as he can. If pressed, or if his doom seems imminent, he summons the Orbital Compound.

Battle Aftermath: The PCs may investigate the room upon defeating the two druids. Upon investigating the altar, read the following:

This is where you saw the urn, but it is no longer here. The altar it rested upon is a 4' square piece of granite. There is a makeshift step before it which the druids used to more easily access the urn.

There are two cots near the altar, and next to these a small chest filled with rations (about 2 man-weeks' worth), an admixture of coins (20 gp, 33 ep and 40 sp), a gem-studded wand (non-magical, but the gem is a topaz worth 300 gp), and two *potions of extra-healing*.

Alzet (Human Umber Eye Dark Druid 11th) – SZ M; AC 5; MV 12"; hp 50; #AT 1; THAC0 14; Dmg 1d4; SA spells; SD druid abilities; AL CE; I 15; W 18; XP 2950. Possessions: *Bracers of defense AC 5* (fashioned from green dragon scales), *urn ring* (part of the *Urn of Elemental Darkness*), *ring of fire resistance*, *boots of levitation*, *dagger*.

- 1st: *detect magic*, *entangle*, *rain of sparks** x2
- 2nd: *charm person or mammal*, *chill metal*, *heat metal*, *obscurement*, *phantasmagoria**
- 3rd: *contagion** x2, *darkcloak**, *poison*, *summon insects*
- 4th: *dispel magic*, *repel insects*, *summon animal** x2
- 5th: *major wounding**, *transmute rock to mud*
- 6th: *feeblemind*

Rhengest (Human Umber Eye Dark Druid 11th) – SZ M; AC 7; MV 12"; hp 46; #AT 1; THAC0 14; Dmg 1d4; SA spells; SD druid abilities; AL CE; I 16; W 17; XP 2886. Possessions: *Ring of protection +3*, *urn ring* (part of the *Urn of Elemental Darkness*), *potion of invisibility*, *dagger*, *club*.

- 1st: *invisibility to animals*, *rain of sparks** x2, *spoil fodder**
- 2nd: *barkskin*, *trip* x2, *unseelie fire**, *warp wood* x2
- 3rd: *contagion**, *darkcloak**, *snare*, *withstand heat**
- 4th: *control temperature 10' radius*, *hold plant*, *protection from lightning*, *summon animal**
- 5th: *entropy**, *wall of smoke**
- 6th: *wall of thorns*

Air Elementals (2) – SZ L; AC 2; MV 36"; HD 8; hp 40 each; #AT 1; THAC0 12; Dmg 2d10; SA bonuses during aerial combat, whirlwind; SD hit only by +2 or better weapons; AL N; XP 1225; MM p. 37.





URN OF ELEMENTAL DARKNESS (MAJOR ARTIFACT)

This brass urn is 3' high and almost 2' round. Its extended lip is etched with symbols indicating some connection to the elemental planes. A powerful divination may (at the GM's option) reveal that these symbols detail – in some indecipherable way – its history. The language used here is some obscure dialect, though most of these symbols are alien picture-glyphs, unknown to all but the most knowledgeable sages (GMs must determine chances of deciphering the glyphs). There is one symbol which appears to have been recently added to the urn's symbolic sequence. This symbol simply translates in the common tongue as "Activate." When its inside is inspected, four brass rings are revealed, all etched with this same singular symbol. These are the urn rings required to maintain the urn's presence on the current plane and which are alternately used to activate and form powers from it.

This item is usable by those who can summon it, maintain it and control it, which are all very different facets of its nature as described below. There is a ritual which is enacted to precede its use, and a set of requirements and conditions as detailed below to maintain and use its power on the plane it is summoned to.

History

The urn has no written history; knowledge of it has always been passed down to its users by verbal communication only. Its origins are unclear, its purpose not understood, and its power immense. Those who use it get a feeling that they are connected to the elements themselves, and for fleeting moments now and then, maybe even part of them.

Summoning the Urn

An altar of simple stone perfectly measuring 4' square must be erected according to the ritual. The being summoning it must be able to magically see the urn (by use of magical spells or items – GM's option). This of itself is quite a task, as the "seeker" seems to move through a strange realm upon focusing their will to locate the urn; it is a veritable plane of shapes, colors, textures and materials, both foreign and at times distantly familiar, that they move through in their minds eye while attempting to find the urn. There is a 50% chance per hour of searching that the traveler will finally locate and see the urn, which is represented by a large black hole.

Once found, the scribe must imagine grasping its edges and pulling it to him across the same space he or she just traveled through, and thus to his current plane. This requires a save vs. spells (once per day only). If successful, the urn physically appears on the altar. The "summoner" will note that only 1d6 rounds have passed for the completion of this ordeal, which is surreal considering that he felt that he was occupied for hours, perhaps longer, in their search for it. In fact his body has experienced a time distortion by having expended more time in the urn's realm than on his current plane. If the save vs. spells fails, the person loses his magical grip on the urn and cannot attempt its retrieval for another day.

Maintaining the Urn on its Current Plane

A single individual must attend to the urn at all times, making an intelligence check once every 4-hour period. The individual can reduce the concentration needed to maintain the urn by attuning himself to it through donning one of the four urn rings found inside it. Using one of these rings confers a +5 bonus to intelligence for such checks relating to the urn only and only for as long as the individual stays within a 4' radius of the urn. Failing any of these aforementioned requirements causes the urn to disappear back to the plane it originated from.

Also, note that concentration can be negatively affected by outside sources; GMs must adjudicate the penalties for interruptions and the like on a case-by-case basis. If the individual maintaining contact is damaged for more than 50% of his or her remaining hp, concentration is immediately terminated and the urn disappears. Also note Using Powers in Tandem, below.

Controlling the Urn

The urn must initially be experimented with to learn its various properties. Those individuals wanting to use its powers must place their hands within it after touching the symbol on their urn ring to its mate on the urn's lip, thus activating the urn's elemental energies. Once hands are inside it, the manipulator starts to feel substances which conform in part to the intended power he or she wishes to summon, create or wield. The elemental stuff that they touch, form and extract, is a raw material given reality only through the "sculptor's" tenacity, will and imagination.

Note that the urn can convey as many powers as the generating PC's intelligence score divided by 4 (rounded down), to a maximum of 4 powers. These powers must be constructed in the manner suggested above, and may take as long as a month to realize. This depends upon the individual's patience and resolve. GMs must decide suitable time frames depending on the PC's intended goals. Note that abandoning one goal dissipates the elemental energy which had been previously taking shape both mentally in the PC's mind and physically on the urn's plane. This energy flows back to a pool, from whence it may be summoned and shaped again, but it cannot be transferred from image to image. Once broken, the image and time allotted to it are gone, much like a piece of broken sculpture. The process must be started anew.

Using Urn Powers

Each power requires a number of rounds to summon, as listed in its power description. The summoning PC can be interrupted like a spell-caster during the summoning process. A currently maintained power can be ended with one round's effort, thus allowing the summoner to redistribute intelligence check penalties for using powers in tandem...

Using Powers in Tandem

The urn's different powers may be used in tandem with one another; thus, a pair of urn elementals could be summoned and ordered to attack, followed immediately by creating an elemental barrier, etc. Using one power, letting it run its course, and then summoning another power does not require extra intelligence checks. However, maintaining concurrent urn powers strains the summoner's concentration. This strain is reflected in different accumulative penalties, and in the need to make an intelligence check (see below) every 15 minutes for as long as two or more powers are maintained. If an intelligence check fails, the summoner loses his grip on maintaining the urn on its current plane and it disappears; this dispels all powers that are currently active.

Intelligence Checks for Multiple Powers Summoned:

Roll 1d20 every 15 minutes against the summoner's modified intelligence rating. Reduce the summoner's base intelligence score accordingly for each power currently active (see the Intelligence Check Penalty in each power description). Apply a bonus of +5 to the summoner's intelligence score if an urn ring is worn. If the roll is higher than the modified intelligence score, the check fails. Note that a natural roll of 20 always fails.

Accumulating Urn Powers

The urn has currently dispensed the powers described below, though considering the range of possibilities, the GM is encouraged to craft powers generated by their players during role-playing situations.

The known powers can act as guideposts for assigning your own summoning times, intelligence check penalties, and durations to new powers created from the urn during game play. Typically, each new power should require as many rounds to summon as its intelligence check penalty (i.e., -1 penalty equals 1 round, -2 equals 2, etc.).

Note that these powers equate to the elemental planes in some way. They are given form through sheer willpower and are thus difficult to maintain away from their origins for any extended time period. In crafting powers from this urn keep in mind that there can be no permanently created powers, such as spells learned, magic items, etc. The elemental stuff which is used to craft powers from the urn is weakened when summoned to the Prime Material Plane. Urn powers which equate to spell-like powers or spells should have shorter durations, especially for those summoned creatures and beings which operate outside a 40' radius of the urn. The urn is much like a power source and conduit; the closer you stay to it, the longer the summoned spell or power will function, and the stronger such spells or powers will be. Separate GMs must use their own judgment and creativity when crafting urn powers while aiming for a balance they feel comfortable with.

Using the Urn in Campaign Settings

The urn is a static magical item. After reading its many limitations and powers above you should note that it cannot be easily found, summoned, maintained or used without specific inputs and knowledge, time and forethought. This item may well revolve around some local religious cult (as mine has) and could be sought for reasons relating to its limited use in the area to which it can be summoned (i.e., where an altar is located). Many reasons could abound for finding and using it. GMs are encouraged to have fun working its strange history into their own campaigns.

SUMMON URN ELEMENTAL

Summoning Time: 1 round

Duration: Minutes equal to the controller's level plus ½ his wisdom score, or until dispelled.

Intelligence Check Penalty: -1 for each pair summoned

As a *conjure elemental* spell cast at 14th level except that elementals are always, and perplexingly, summoned in pairs of the same type. They may operate freely, without the summoner's need for concentrating, within a 1 mile radius of him or her; but as anything created through the use of this urn they only have a limited survival time upon the Prime Material Plane.

PROJECT ELEMENTAL PRESENCE

Summoning Time: 1 round

Duration: 10d4 minutes, or until dispelled.

Intelligence Check Penalty: -1

As long as there is another urn altar within a 1 mile radius of the wielder, he may project an elemental image of himself to it. The image appears distorted, even nonhuman to a greater degree: the head is a mass of swirling energy of different colors, the eyes appear made of solid brass and pupil-less, the hands of some inky, light-reflective material, comparing distantly to shadow stuff, and the body's covering of an inverted coloration, like that of a picture's negative. The image is constrained to the same 4' radius area about the new altar as the projector is to the original; the presence may move freely within this area. Pressing the image beyond this boundary automatically dispels this effect. The presence can speak and can see things as if the originator were actually there, but has no other physical reality (it can cast no spells, etc.).

ELEMENTAL BARRIER

Summoning Time: 1 round

Duration: Hours equal to the originator's wisdom divided by 3.

Intelligence Check Penalty: -1 (for 1-2 barriers) or -2 (for 3-4)

This power allows the manipulator to create a stationary geometrical pattern of elemental energies: Flat/planar, convex, concave, or spherical.

All barriers seem to ebb and flow away from energies/forces directed at them, morphing, shrinking, distending, enlarging, etc. where applicable to achieve their separate armor class ratings. Each absorbs up to 3rd-level spells; all other spells negotiated against them, including those which normally allow passage through a wall or barrier, are checked against the summoner's saves. They also have primary effects and defenses based upon their distinct shapes (see below).

Barriers can conform to spaces no greater than 10' wide by 20' high by 5' deep. The originator can part these barriers (2-8' new optional width) for up to four rounds, allowing beings to move safely through them. Each barrier can be set in one specific locale within a 200' radius of the urn as long as the summoner has seen the area beforehand.

Up to four such barriers can be created and maintained. For each barrier beyond one that is currently in existence, there is an accumulative 10% chance (rolled every hour) that the barriers have difficulties in attuning to the plane, causing them to randomly wink in and out of existence. This appears as an energy discharge, with the barrier appearing and disappearing at random intervals (every 1d8 rounds upon initial failure; roll upon first sighting it). For example, having four barriers existing at once equals a 30% chance, rolled hourly, of each becoming unstable with the aforementioned results. A single barrier can be maintained without difficulty for the allotted time period.

Beings can attempt to move through winking barriers; if timed correctly, they do so without damage. If not, they take damage from the barrier's primary effect and are either flung ahead 1d10 feet or back 1d10 feet. A flung being landing within the barrier's space sustains damage equal to the barrier's remaining hp, while simultaneously destroying the barrier.

Barrier Shapes & Statistics

Flat/Planar (red, orange and yellow coloration)

Primary Effect: Fire element inflicts 3d6 fire damage if touched or successfully struck in melee.

AC -4; hp equal to 1.5 x summoner's full hp; SD immune to fire and heat, burns missiles.

Concave (blue, white and deep purple coloration)

Primary Effect: Ice element inflicts 3d6 cold damage if touched or successfully struck in melee.

AC -3; hp equal to 1.75 x summoner's full hp; SD immune to ice and cold, deflects missiles (10% back on firer).

Convex (gray, dark gray coloration)

Primary Effect: Stone element inflicts 4d6 blunt damage if touched or successfully struck in melee.

AC -6; hp equal to 2 x summoner's full hp; SD immune to blunt weapons, deflects missiles (20% back on firer).

Spherical (Black, steely black shot with flecks of rust coloration)

Primary Effect: Iron element inflicts 5d6 unavoidable crushing damage if touched or successfully struck in melee.

AC -8; hp equal to 2.25 x summoner's full hp; SD immune to blunt/piercing weapons, shatters missiles.

ORBITAL COMPOUND

Summoning Time: 3 rounds

Duration: Minutes equal to the summoner's constitution score, or until dispelled.

Intelligence Check Penalty: -3

When summoned this appears as a spinning trigonal pyramid, approximately 4' high and hovering 1' off the ground. Its colors seem to change depending on the moment it is viewed and which of its surfaces is showing, but the gamut of colors are seen, with the majority being variations of reds, yellows, oranges, blues, browns and shades of gray and black, and all highlighted by a piercing whiteness, which causes onlookers to temporarily avert their gazes or raise their hands to shield their vision.

This is a compound of elemental essence, held together by the summoner at a tremendous cost to concentration. Once summoned, its various functions are commanded by anyone wearing an urn ring; it takes one round to pass control to another ring-wearer. The orbital compound hovers by some levitation motion and moves and acts very quickly through an image-driven mental link with its summoner.

Summoning and using the orbital compound conveys a -3 penalty to intelligence checks to maintain the urn on this plane; it disappears if the urn departs its current plane, when it is grounded (touches a primary surface, such as a floor, a ceiling, a wall, the ground), if it is dispelled, or after minutes equal to the summoner's constitution score. Only one orbital compound can be summoned and maintained through this urn at any time.

The Compound's Functions

Continuous Blinding Light:

Save vs. spells or blinded for 1d4+1 rounds. Any being within sight of the compound who fails to take precautions against this effect must make a saving throw once per turn. Those wearing urn rings are not affected.

Defensive Traits:

- AC equal to the summoner's
- hp equal to twice the summoner's full hp
- Immune to elemental-based attacks (earth, air, water, fire, etc.)
- Immune to non-magical weapons (need at least +1 weapon to hit)

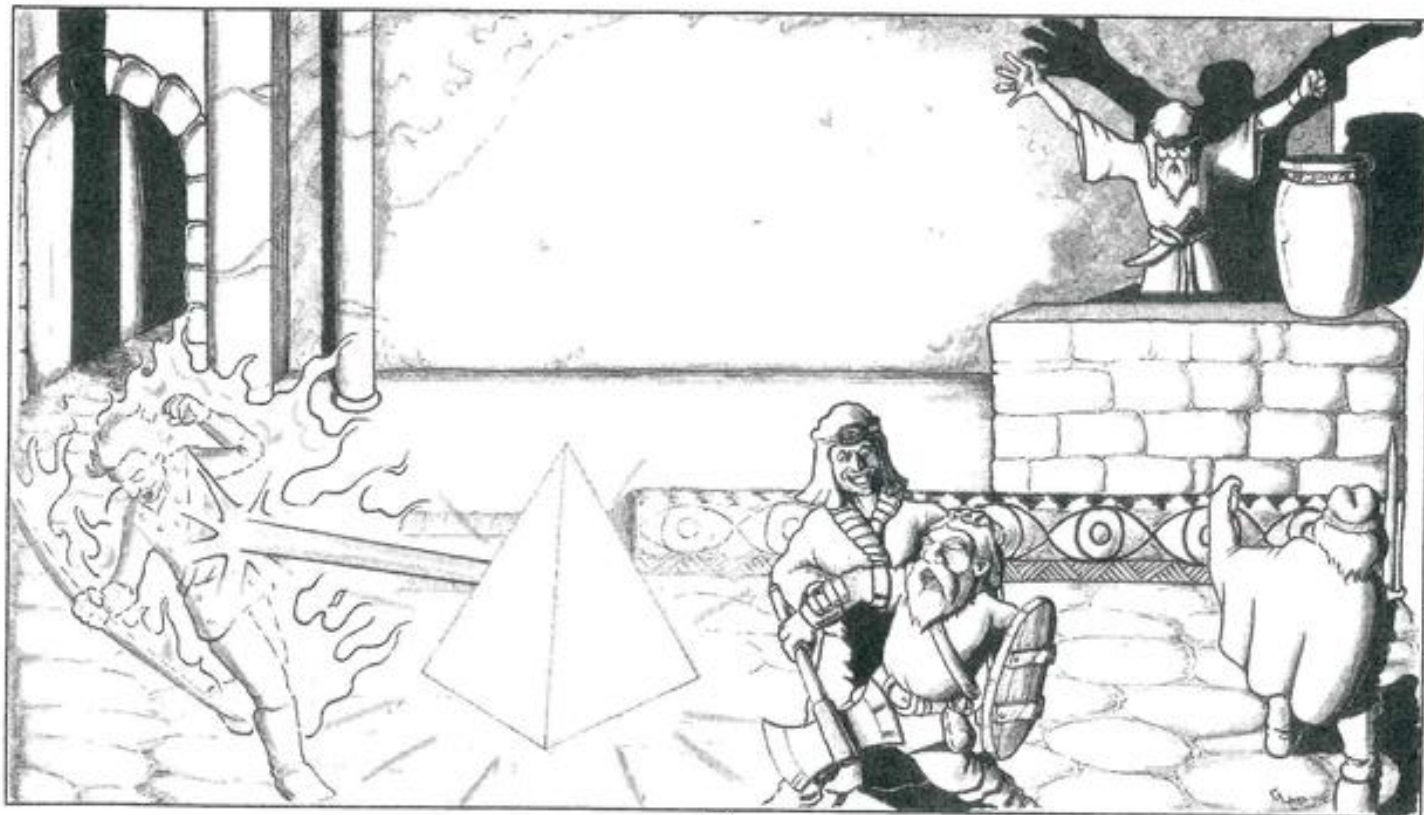
Movement & Attacks (per round):

- Move up to 12" and attack with BOTH the Elemental Burst and Drain Elemental Energy powers.
- Move up to 24" and attack with ONE power.
- Move up to 36" without attacking

Elemental Burst: This is a burst of a pure and distinct elemental energy. Roll 1d6 for which elements touch the target and for their effects. The range of each burst is sight, up to 120'. This is a beam attack originating from one of the compound's surfaces.

1. Air (white burst): 3d4 buffet damage; target must save vs. dragon breath or stunned for 1d4 rounds.
2. Earth (brown burst): 3d6 crushing damage; target must save vs. petrification or stunned for 1d6 rounds.
3. Fire (orange burst): 2d6 fire damage; target must save vs. dragon breath or be enveloped in the fire, sustaining an additional 1d10 fire damage.
4. Water (blue burst): 4d4 water damage; target must save vs. paralysis or sustain 2d4 suffocation/drowning damage.
5. Two of the above (roll twice ignoring rolls of 5 and 6).
6. Three of the above (roll three times ignoring rolls of 5 and 6).

Drain Elemental Energy: This field creates a type of inertia/dampening effect which is hard to overcome (save vs. spells at -4). Its invisible barriers extend out from it to a 30' radius, making all magical weapons strike as if these were one plus less (-1 penalty "to hit"), all magical armor more brittle (-1 penalty to AC) and causing non-magical weapons to break upon striking any surface of equal or greater tensile strength. There is 50% chance for those failing these saves that their subsequent melee damage is halved (another save vs. spells at -4 avoids this effect; and other bonuses, magical or other, are not affected). When the field disappears the aforementioned penalties cease. The field lasts one round unless re-summoned.



27. DOOR

You see a bolted iron door.

This door is similar to others on this level. It is easily unbolted and opened.

28. STORAGE ROOM

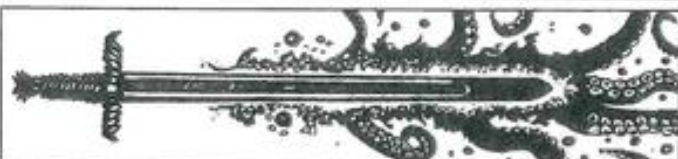
This appears to be a ransacked storage room. Trunks, boxes, barrels, kegs, and bags are all present, and all contain various overflowing items. In fact their contents appear to have been recently rummaged through: cask lids are cast aside, box tops have been opened, etc., and sundry items have been searched through and discarded. It is obvious that someone was looking for something here!

The Umber Eye sect druids created this mess in their search for the "spike," which they now assume is being held by the Black Hat sect on level #3. If Fenelorth is with the party, there is a 35% chance that he will find his possessions laid in a pile by a nearby trunk. He claims them and begins outfitting himself. Otherwise, the PCs must spend a turn searching for his possessions among the many items here to locate them.

This room is loaded with a seemingly unending array of containers. It would be impossible to search all of its contents, in the containers or on the floor, given time considerations. If the PCs search the room, expend 1 turn (10 minutes) of game time and roll one d% search check (see the table below) per character doing so. If two PCs roll in the same range, only one PC (the one with the higher roll) finds the appropriate item; the other finds the item listed immediately above it. For example, if two PCs are searching, and one rolls a 64%, and the other rolls a 69%, the latter will find the *tentacle longsword* +2, and the former will find the quiver with 20 arrows +2. Essentially only one item can be found per searching character, as there is just too much to search through. Expend an additional turn of game time and add +5% to each character's search roll (25% would equal 30% on the second search, 35% on the third search, etc.) for every search after the first.

Die Roll	Result
01-50	search reveals nothing
51-60	quiver with 20 arrows +2
61-70	tentacle longsword +2 (see sidebar)
71-75	potion of invisibility
76-80	scroll of wall of stone
81-85	ring of protection +2
86-90	scroll of restoration
91-95	potion of healing
96-100	staff of command (6 charges) or Fenelorth's equipment (see area 32) if the PCs precede him here.

Tentacle Longsword +2 – This sword's hilt is filigreed with golden tentacles. If firmly grasped and the word "tentacle" is spoken aloud, 1d4+8 golden tentacles will shoot forth. Each of the tentacles is 10' long, with AC 4, and can sustain 12 points of damage. If a tentacle strikes an opponent, he takes 1d4 points of damage immediately and must make a save vs. magic or be grasped by the tentacle, taking 1d12 damage per round until he or the tentacle is slain, or until the effect expires. The tentacles are non-intelligent and cannot be commanded. The sword wielder may summon this power once per day. It lasts for 9 rounds.



29. FLICKERING WALL

You note a flickering wall ahead, much like the wall opposite it to the east. The only apparent difference between the two is that this wall seems insubstantial for moments at a time.

The barrier will disappear and reappear at a set interval for rounds equal to an initial 1d8 die roll. Roll for this number upon the PCs sighting the barrier. When the wall disappears, the PCs may quickly view this chamber's inner area if they are positioned to do so. Read the following:

Beyond the entry area is a large room. It is too dark inside to make out any details, but you note no immediate movement within it at this time.

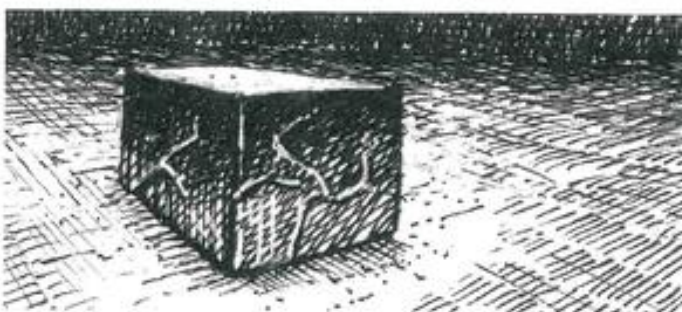
This wall is the same in all respects as the one at area 25 except that it has become unstable by proximity to the other barrier. Rhengest (area 26) maintains it as he does not know that it has become unstable.

PCs may enter and leave the room beyond when the wall disappears. PCs lingering in its space upon its reappearance take damage as outlined in the Elemental Barrier description (p. 18). Otherwise it must be destroyed when physically present. The latter strategy alerts Rhengest, and although he will not come forth to initiate combat personally, he will awaken his counterpart, Alzet, and dispatch air elementals to combat or drive off the intruders. He may elect to project an image of himself to the altar in area 30 to note who the intruders are (see Project Elemental Presence power).

Flat/Planar Elemental Barrier (red, orange and yellow coloration)

Primary Effect: Fire element inflicts 3d6 fire damage if touched or successfully struck in melee.

AC -4; hp 69; SD immune to fire and heat, burns missiles; see p. 18



30. ALTAR CHAMBER

Upon entering the chamber you note that its only feature is a 4' square stone edifice, a block or perhaps an altar, positioned at its center. The room is otherwise empty.

This chamber was to be an alternate area for using the urn from, thus the second altar. It can also be used to summon the urn if area 26 is compromised. There is nothing of interest in the room, though there is a chance that Rhengest will take a look to see who the intruders are by projecting an image of himself upon the altar.

31. PRISON DOOR

You note an iron door with a bolt. There is a small barrel to the left of the door and a small box to the right. The door is bolted shut.

The barrel contains stale water and several ladles; the box is half filled with hard biscuits and mealy worms.

If the PCs check the barrel carefully, a heretofore-unseen leather cord is noted; pulling it upwards brings forth a key, dangling from its wet end. The key is used to unshackle the prisoners inside the room.

The door is easily unbolted and opened.

32. PRISON ROOM

The room stinks of filth. You note three figures shackled to the far south wall; upon coming closer, one of them leaps up and lurches for you, but is propelled backwards by the shackles restraining him. The other two figures, who are emaciated and apparently near death, barely note your presence. Their tattered clothing, at least, indicates that they are possibly woodsmen who bear from Narlewood!

The standing figure finally notes who you are and exclaims: "The gods save us all! Release me. I am the ranger Fenelorth!"

GM Note: Please feel free to role-play the following situation. You must play Fenelorth to the hilt. His mind is crazed with revenge at this time and he must wind down and reorder his tortured thoughts. He will fearlessly fight onward, exacting as much blood from the druids as humanly possible, even if this course eventually leads to his death.

Fenelorth reveals that the key used to shackle him, so he noted then, was attached to a wet leather thong, and that is all he knows about it. This should be a big clue to the key being hidden in the barrel. If the PCs fail to find the key, then the chains must be broken; however, Fenelorth will ascertain the hiding place and successfully search the barrel upon leaving the room. He uses the key to discard any remaining shackle pieces.

As he is being set free Fenelorth deluges the party with information that he's learned or has guessed at:

1. The adjacent room has many bears in it; he's recognized their growls and has heard their fighting for many days now.
2. The prisoners of this room are sacrificed to a "god" of some sort. He seems grim if asked about his brother, Denej, and states only that he will exact a bloody revenge upon this sect for his brother's death. That is all he reveals.
3. He insists on healing and freeing the two woodsmen (1 and 2 hp, respectively) and asks the PC's assistance in doing so and then in pointing them out of these dungeons, as they can be of no help in a fight and are better used to warn the council and his people in Narlewood.

If the PCs agree to his suggestion, then they must part with the *dark horn*, as this is the only way to open the front gate. This tactic would save the woodsmen, but might also strand the PCs within the dungeon. Fenelorth counters such a resulting argument by stating that the druids must have similar devices for entering and leaving this place, so if they find more druids, they'll find more horns!

4. Fenelorth is unarmed but he remembers an Umber Eye druid ordering a menial to take his belongings to the "storage room." He's certain that this room must be close by.
5. He feels that the magical "light walls" on this level have something to do with the summoning of demons and/or with the powerful working of dark magic. He suggests that they start by eliminating the druids at these areas, thus securing this level.

Fenelorth (and Denej, if used) (Human Rgr 6th) – SZ M; AC 4; MV 12"; hp 39 (26 now); #AT 1 or 2; THAC0 16; Dmg 1d8 or 1d6; SD ranger abilities; AL NG; D 16; XP 662. Possessions: *Studded leather* +1, two *potions of healing*, longsword, short sword, composite long bow. (Note: His equipment is at area 28 unless recovered.)

33. BOLTED IRON DOOR

You arrive before a large, bolted iron door. There is a noticeable stench in the air which is different from the smell of death around you. The stench definitely comes from beyond the door.



34. BEAR DEN

This room contains many misbegotten black bears that have been forgotten with all of the other battles taking place. Their numbers have dwindled over the days gone by, as they have resorted to killing each other for food.

The bears are quite aware of someone being on the other side of the door, and are in fact waiting and listening still, hoping that the door will be opened, in which case they charge through, en masse, attacking anyone in their path. They are fearless to begin with, and will charge haphazardly forward, ravenously seeking revenge upon anyone and anything in their path until destroyed.

There is a chance that the loosed bears could interfere with one or more of the summonings going on in area 26 by either charging through one of the magical walls or being positioned to enter and attack when the walls part. GMs must assign such possibilities. The elementals coming forth will be delayed for 1d4 rounds in returning to help the druids in these chambers as the situation is assessed and they are reordered back to the room(s).

If the bears are defeated, the PCs may investigate their room. There is nothing in it except grisly (grizzly) remains.

Misbegotten Black Bears (15) – SZ M; AC 7; MV 15"; HD 3+3; hp 28 each; #AT 3; THAC0 16; Dmg 1d3+2/1d3+2/1d6; SA hug 2d4 damage; Mutations: razor-sharp claws, physical stamina, unique splay form paws; AL CE; XP 222; Appendix E and MM p. 9.

KEY TO DUNGEON LEVEL #3

General Notes: This level is divided by sects, north and south, with areas north of area 65 being held by the Black Hats, and areas south of that being held by the Umber Eyes. A large Gulf separates the two sides, and it is the scene of many vicious battles. The warring sects attempt to displace each other while attempting to control the Gulf for magical summoning purposes. The Umber Eye sect is winning this battle as they can apply pressure on the Black Hat sect with raids from the level above (air elemental forays). This strategy is allowing them the time they need to summon their "god," N'Threxus, who they hope will destroy their remaining enemies. This requires occasional sacrifices at areas 68 and 69, which the Black Hat sect is obviously attempting to stop.

Neither sect has considered an attack from the outside, so they are carefully following their routines in regard to each other. The Black Hat sect is sequestered, awaiting attacks, whereas the Umber Eye members are concentrated in separate rooms, preparing magical spells, rituals, ordering sacrifices, detailing plans and timetables, and otherwise preparing their resources for the final assault, or for the summoning of their deity. This fluid situation means that infiltration will go unnoticed unless the PCs reveal themselves.

GMs should carefully read each encounter before playing these. If the PCs have interpreted the clues correctly, they will want to proceed to area 71, where they can defeat the druids by dealing with the Dark God. This relates directly to the clue given at the beginning of the adventure: "Seek these dark ones, and by their hand, by their own black arts, shall they be defeated."

The party could elect, especially if they do not have the *Tarrasque Spike*, to attack and destroy the druidic sects. This is a hard road — though not impossible — given stealth and planning. The Umber Eye sect is more susceptible to this long-term strategy, as they feel secure with their greater numbers and are occupied with many preparations, which initially makes them more vulnerable than the Black Hats. If the altar at area 58 is destroyed, then N'Threxus' summoning is permanently postponed until Hesmata erects another; this takes 2d6 days in order to shape and attune with the *Claw of N'Threxus* (see p. 29). If Hesmata is killed (area 55), the Umber Eye sect retreats from the dungeon, leaving it to the Black Hat sect. The PCs will still have to eliminate the Black Hat sect in order to achieve their entire goal here.

B1 - B4. ENTRANCES

The adjacent corridors are the outlets from upward-slanting passages that originate on level #2, approximately 500' away.

Read to players upon entering the level from any direction:

The stonework here is mostly well-worked and finely polished basalt. Its various colors reflect beautifully in the light, but its presence here raises a question of its origin, as no known quarries of this dense rock exist within many hundreds of miles of this location.

35. CHAMBER OF RED DUST

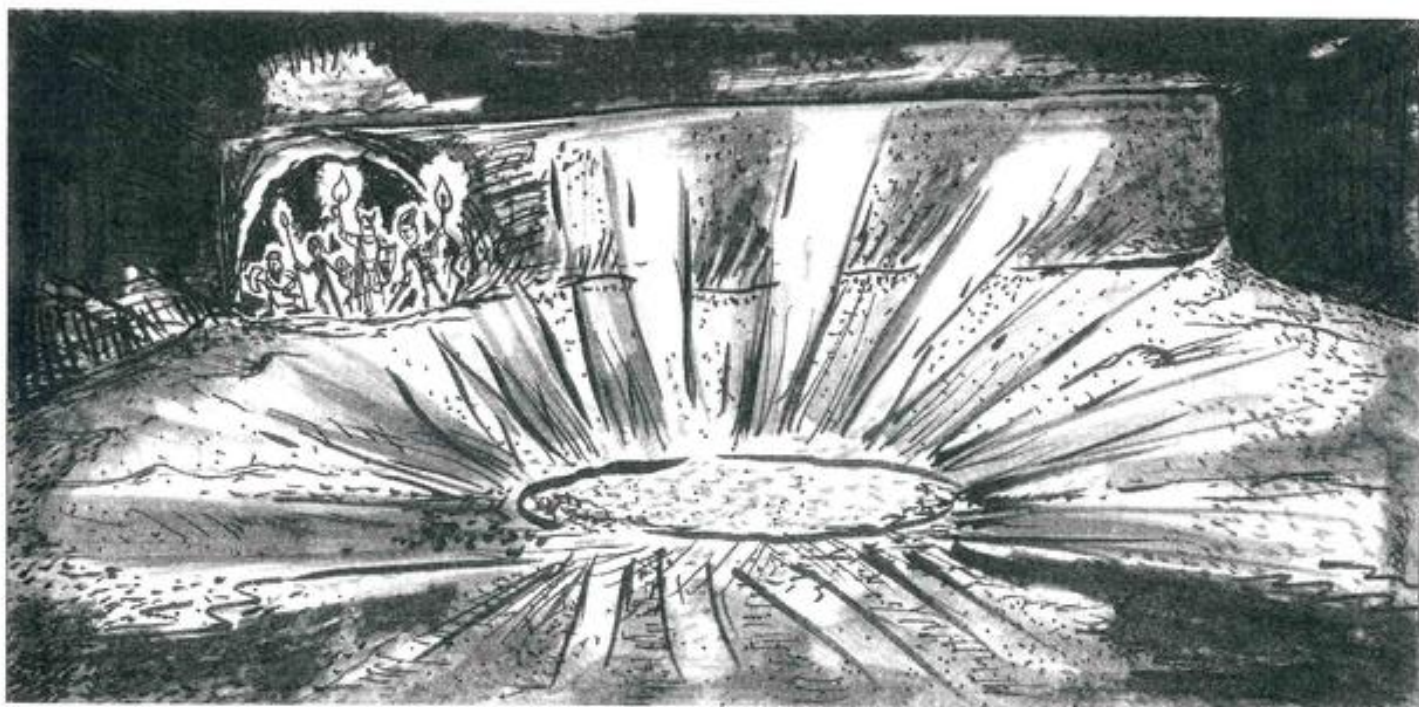
This large chamber's floor, walls and ceiling are covered with a fine reddish dust which has the perceptible smell of iron about it. There is a red glow emanating from beneath the dust near the center of the room.

The glow is caused by a large bloodstone shaped in the likeness of a human heart. It is the item emitting the dust which magically permeates this room. Touching the dust has different debilitating effects upon the being doing so depending on the victim's constitution score. Unless the PCs can navigate above the dust mass, then they are forced to touch it, with the following results if a save vs. poison is failed:

Constitution Score	Result
6 or less	Lose 2 levels permanently.
7-10	Lose 50% of remaining hp, incurable for 2d4 hours unless a save vs. poison is made (saves are allowed hourly).
11-15	Become stunned (unable to move) for number of hours equal to 20 minus constitution score.
16-18	Become slowed (50% movement rate) for a number of turns equal to 20 minus constitution score.
19 or higher	No effect (immune to the dust).

Note that the bloodstone can be neutralized by any one of several spell effects:

- *Remove curse* causes the dust to retreat into the bloodstone in 1d4 rounds, which clears a path for the party. The PCs note that this is a



fast but gradual suction that finally reveals the heart-stone imbedded in the floor. The PCs then have 1d4 rounds in order to cross the room before the dust is re-emitted, exploding into the air out of the heart-stone to once again settle upon all surfaces in the chamber.

• *Dispel magic* causes the heart-stone to stop glowing for 1d4 rounds; the dust does not affect those touching it for that time period, so the room can be crossed while the dust is impotent.

Attacking the dust is not possible; applied fire of any sort creates a maroon cloud of the same properties. However, crossing the room while the dust is in cloud form is a complicated task, as it affects a victim not only through being breathed, but also penetrates a living creature's pores, causing the same effects as outlined above.

The characters could fly or levitate above the dust, or could use other creative ways of avoiding this trap (such as using the *boots of levitation* if previously discovered). But if they attempt to cross it by foot, all PCs must make two saves: One upon immediately touching it and another for continuing across (made at mid point). Note that slowed or stunned individuals need to make an extra save (3 total) to cross the room on foot.

The bloodstone is permanently rooted to the floor. It is easily shattered, though PCs should be reminded that it is probably a highly cursed item. It is impervious to spells, but the slightest damage from a handheld (not ranged) weapon shatters it into thousands of pieces (the red dust) with the nasty results as listed.



36. CHAMBER OF BODIES

You enter a chamber which reeks of strange scent; there are several vats in the middle of the room and many stout wooden tables containing instruments common to the vivisectionist. The walls have standing, but lidless, coffins containing embalmed bodies. Inscribed into the floor before each coffin are silver symbols. Some are unrecognizable, but many indicate specific entreats to unknown spirits! The bodies appear to be of normal people, ranging from prisoners to merchants to other innocents who have been taken prisoner by this cult. There must be at least 50 bodies interred here.

A cleric or druid in the group may (60% chance each) recognize the symbols. Success indicates that the symbols are part of a peculiar unnamed rite which would involve transferring dead spirits into the bodies for control purposes. Thereafter, it is assumed, that the bodies would come under the control of those animating them.

Any good PC will want to destroy this room. Note, that many of the vat chemicals are highly flammable. If fire or lightning is used to destroy this room's contents, then the chemicals explode in a large burst of flame, creating an immense cloud of acrid smoke that lasts for 1d4+1 hours. The cloud expands to fill this room during the first 5 minutes and then takes a full hour to flow outward (towards area 35 and the nearby upward slanting corridor), thereafter adversely affecting those passing between areas 35 through 38. Anyone breathing the smoke must make a save vs. poison or be helpless for 1d6+1 rounds due to choking and nausea. Even those making successful saves will be helpless for as long as they remain within the cloud and for an additional round after they emerge from it.



37. RED ROOM

This chamber appears painted over in many red colors which shift as you view them. Its overall effect is eerie, as if the walls themselves are alive!

This room was once the abode of a blood demon (see *Claws in the Dark*, Part 2 of the *Dark Quest* series), though it was recently dispatched by Hesmat, High Priest of the Umber Eye sect.

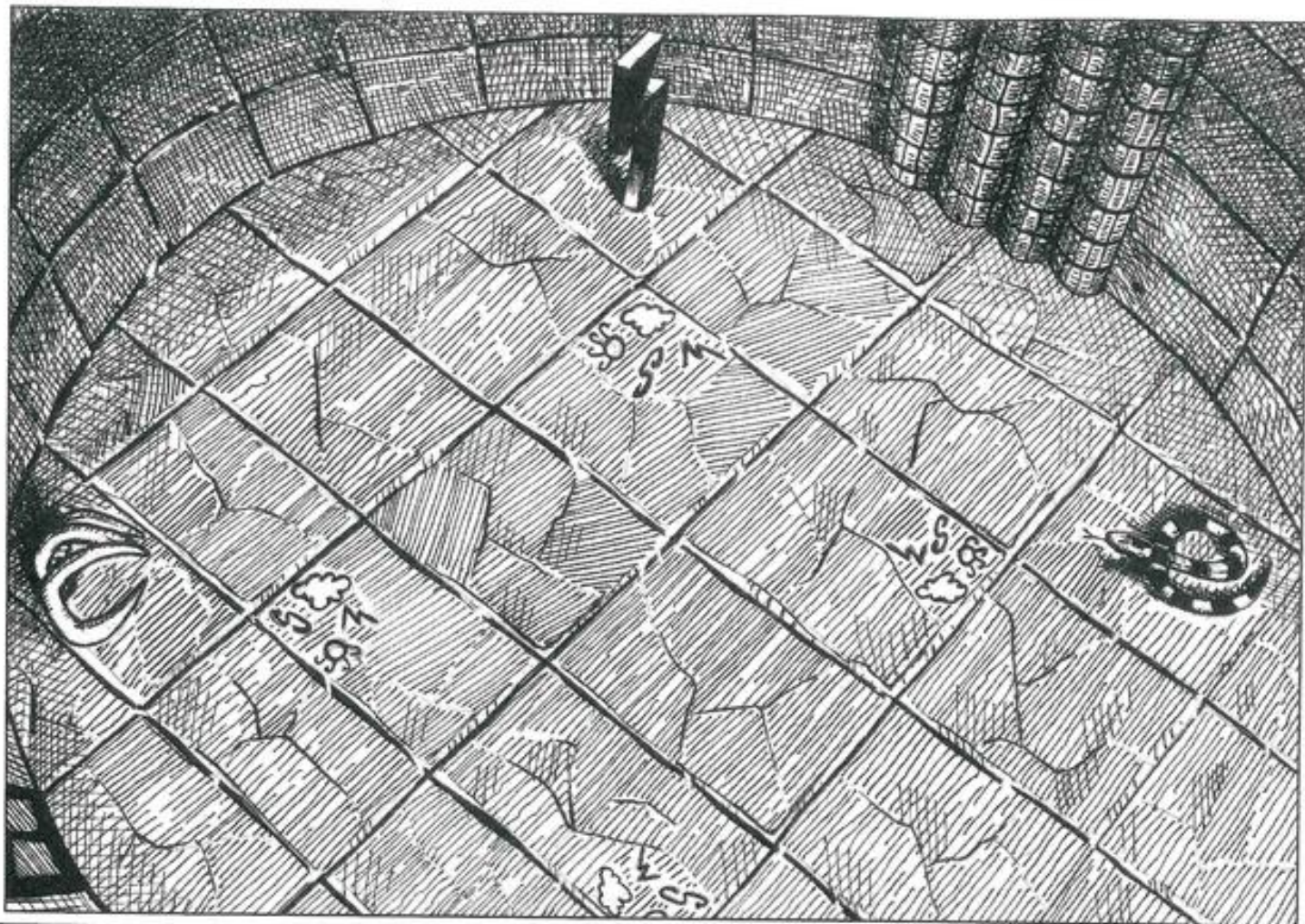
Blood demons are rare but are very exacting in their requirements for being summoned – their abodes must be summoned with them. The room is a weird combination of what once used to be a normal chamber and a blood demon's planar abode. Upon its death, the demon's room started losing its capacity to maintain the admixture – it is in fact being slowly rejected from the Prime Material Plane by the demon's lack of focus upon it. This will take 1d4+1 more days to accomplish, after which this room appears as a normal chamber.

Any PC touching the walls in any way receives a subtle psychic image from the demonic plane that this chamber was once attuned to. The following image repeats itself every time a wall is touched before this room is normal again:

You see a red plain overflowing with torrents of blood and creatures crawling forth from these or rejoining its various pools. This immediate image fades to be replaced by a city, far away and desolate. The next series of images seem almost forced into your mind and in such a way that so many present themselves that you lose count of their numbers. An ever present picture in each of these images, however different each appears to be in relation to the other, is that of hooded being with an executioner's axe seen beheading thousands of people. This torrent of images finally slows, showing that same axe, in slow motion, flinging aside a young man's head. You somehow feel that this young man would have achieved greatness had it not been for his Overlord's oppression.

The last image of the axe breaks the psychic connection.

The PCs will find that they are actually gasping, crying, or in other ways expressing emotion, over the young man's death. These emotive reactions are involuntarily produced by the temporary link established between two psyches – each of the PC's separate psyches and whatever powerful source from which these images flowed.



Rite of Passage (Magical Book) — see area 38

This book is written in the secret tongue of the dark druids. Its purpose may be ascertained by reading the first few pages. (This takes about 10 minutes.) However, the PCs must have some means of deciphering the book, whether through some magic allowing them to comprehend languages or a thief's ability to decipher unknown languages. Success partially informs the PCs of the book's powers and purpose:

1. Upon nearing the "Gulf" the words "Darkness has come, we must walk, walk the path unseen," must be intoned by the PC holding the book. There is an indication that "a path" will be seen thereafter.
2. The book indicates by the riddle "East are two, others are doomed," that the objective point of walking this unseen path is somewhere to the east of the Gulf. The "two" is not clarified.
3. The line "Talon and snake - lightning and cloud" is disturbingly repeated over and over again. There is the mention of two sacrifices - one of blood and one of fire - being made, but to what, or at what time, is not indicated.
4. The three sentences "Past the twain to the boiling and burning," "Pierce the Darkness," and "Take back the sacrifice you have given" seem notable, but wholly uninterpretable.
5. The last sentences in this book send chills down the reader's spine: "Touch Darkness! Touch Dream! Become one with the many. Thousands with the few. Join in his nearness to strike out afar. Curses belong to those who gainsay, who take the indecorous path, downward and out, instead of downward and on."

Explanations (for the GM)

1. The path to walk is invisible to those nearing the Gulf unless the intoned words are repeated before entering it. The PCs will note a golden circle hedging the Gulf (area 65) upon intoning the words.
2. The "two" are the Dark God's two emanations, seen previously depicted upon the frescoes about this stronghold and referenced briefly in the note found on level #1 at Mahzrat's Tomb (area 11). These emanations guard the Gulf and are seen at area 70.
3. Blood must be sacrificed to the Talon-Snake emanation and fire must be offered to the Lightning-Cloud form in order to pass into the Dark God's Antechamber (area 71).
4. This indicates that upon bypassing the two guardians that they must use the *Tarrasque Spike* to "pierce" the veil they encounter; they will then be confronted (at area 71) by their own sacrifices, which they must "take back." This is accomplished by killing what the sacrifices have become. Though a real combat, it is wholly symbolic of offering the sacrifice again, but on a higher level and with higher purpose, that of not only approaching the Dark God, but of actually communing with him, thus entering his thoughts.
5. These lines refer to joining with the Dark God and his thoughts by continuing down into the Gulf. Those continuing downward and "on" will be guided to him; those rejecting (gainsaying) his offer are cursed as they head downward and "out" (see Ending the Adventure).

This book magically teleports to its dais upon the PCs accepting or rejecting the Dark God's entreats at area 71. It is a unique item which cannot be duplicated.

38. CHAMBER OF EXALTED PASSAGE

This chamber is huge. You see four symbol sets carved into squares upon the floor here. Each has the following separately inscribed symbols within their 5' square areas: talon, lightning bolt, snake, cloud. Thus there are four sets of four symbols each.

The far north wall has these same symbols carved upon four columns there. The columns mesh perfectly with the wall, jutting out about 3' from them and ranging to the ceiling in height. In each corner are 10' high statues carved in the likeness of the presented symbols — one for each. These statues are glowing with faint silver light.

Columns: If the columns along the north wall are checked, characters get the feeling that there must be a small space in back of these. The symbol squares are complex keys for opening these columns, thus revealing the dais containing the "Rite of Passage," a special tome (see sidebar) that is required to pass over the Gulf (area 65) and proceed to area 71.

Symbol Squares: Only Jakust (the new High Priest of the Black Hat sect) knows the proper sequences to open the columns, which requires stepping upon the symbols in each square in a particular order; the order is different for each square. There is an accompanying clue to the correct sequences chiseled into the floor near each symbol set.

SOUTHWEST SQUARE

Clue: "Burst the circle with sharp swiftness."

Sequence: Lightning, cloud, talon, snake.

SOUTHEAST SQUARE

Clue: "Obscure the stroke with a supple hand."

Sequence: Cloud, lightning, snake, talon.

NORTHWEST SQUARE

Clue: "Catch the dart with heaven-sent showers."

Sequence: Talon, snake, lightning, cloud.

NORTHEAST SQUARE

Clue: "Holes with rakes obscure the light."

Sequence: Snake, talon, cloud, lightning.

Upon successfully completing a sequence for a square, an audible clicking sound emanates from the columns and a corresponding statue (random corner) stops glowing. The PCs must complete all four sequences (correctly stepping upon the 16 symbols present) to unlock the columns. The columns resist all other methods of opening or bypassing them.

Statues: The statues are defensive magical mechanisms which attack those failing to initiate the correct sequences to open the lock. Failing at any one sequence results in a statue attacking all beings present in the room with its respective spell-like power. Roll 1d4 to note which statue is triggered. Re-roll for deactivated statues. A statue also releases its spell-like powers if approached within 10', attacked or touched.

Magical Statues (4) — AC -10; hp 225 each; SA spell-like powers; SD impervious to non-magical physical attacks, immune to acid, cold, electricity and fire, saves as a 21st-level druid. Spell-like Powers (one per statue):

1. **Lightning:** Lightning appears to rain from the ceiling, causing 20d6 worth of lightning damage, divided among the current occupants of the room (i.e., if there are four occupants, then each takes 5d6 lightning damage). Anyone touching the statue, including striking it with a handheld weapon, automatically receives the full damage, no dispersal.
2. **Cloud:** Acid appears to rain from the ceiling, causing 20d6 worth of acid damage, but otherwise handled like the Lightning statue above.

3. **Talon:** Occupants of the room see mental images of taloned claws raking them, for 16d6 slashing damage, handled as above.

4. **Snake:** Occupants of the room see mental images of a snake constricting them, for 16d6 constriction damage, handled as above.

Successfully Completing the Sequences: Upon opening this lock the two middle columns part, revealing a small stone dais behind them. Upon this dais is a large book — Rite of Passage. It is leather bound, studded with various gems and rimmed with platinum.

39. THE DIN OF DISCORD

All PCs listening from this spot hear the sounds of battle south of here. There are shouts and screams often intermixed with inhuman voices and other noises, such as spells being cast and the results of these. More often the PCs hear a creature dying, its last screech fading away as it plummets into the Gulf.

40. DRUID QUARTERS

This chamber is unoccupied, but contains two cots and various other items, which appear haphazardly thrown about. It is an obvious resting place for someone. As you step within this chamber, you hear a great explosion to the south.

This is Lorga's and Calia's room, two Black Hat druids who are currently involved with the many battles raging near the Gulf (area 65). They have had no time to rest ever since the Umber Eye sect began their assault. They are always found as a pair and at or near area 66.



41. OBSTRUCTED PASSAGE

This location is 40' from the northern entryway to area 42.

The area before you looks pulverized and is littered with debris. The walls have been blasted by magic and are marked with many warding runes and symbols which to the trained eye appear to glow. The passageway ahead is cluttered with stones, dirt, and brambles; you cannot see beyond it. There is an audible sound of many voices ahead, some chanting, others wailing curses on high, others issuing orders above this tumult. Despite these noises, you hear the distant sounds of explosions and battle further south.

The bramble/rubble pile slows movement of those crossing it by 50%, and the runes and symbols glow brighter hues if approached (warning the druids hiding just inside area 42). If the PCs cross the warded area of runes and symbols, then previously hidden Black Hat druids to the south appear and attack. (See area 42 for their statistics.)

If the PCs wait in this area for 12 minutes or longer, and if they have not neutralized the *Urn of Elemental Darkness* at area 26, then two 8 HD air elementals appear from the north. Their orders are explicit: Attack anyone or anything here and in area 42. The PCs will have to defend themselves in this instance. This unforeseen combat also alerts the two hiding Black Hat druids, and they attack as well. Fresh sets of air elementals appear at 12 minute intervals to replace dispelled sets; they melee anyone in this area unless the Umber Eye druids at area 26 are killed.

42. BLACK HAT RITUAL CHAMBER

The PCs should have a plan of attack to assault this area, as this is the last stronghold on this level for the Black Hat sect. All druids present fight to the death, using every stratagem available to kill the attackers. The Black Hats' High Priest, Jakust, is currently involved with summoning creatures at area 46, which are then dispatched to the Gulf (area 65) to fight the battles raging there. If the PCs successfully press home their attack here, Jakust redirects these creatures to defend this area instead. He then appears 1d10 rounds later, ready to fight to the death. Otherwise the two druids already present will handle the situation.

Tactics: The druids are concerned with preventing penetration into this area, so they defend the bottleneck until this is compromised, then retreat within this ritual room to summon more creatures. They fight to the death here while awaiting reinforcements.

Hrag & Fevroth (Human Black Hat Dark Druids 12th) – SZ M;
AC 8; MV 12"; hp 60 each; #AT 1; THAC0 14; Dmg 1d4+1;
SA spells; SD druid abilities; AL CE; W 18; XP 3110. Possessions:
Ring of protection +2, dagger +1.

Joining ritual powers within 300 yards of area 42: Summons as 14th-level; regenerates during sleep; drawbacks if canceled; see sidebar.

- 1st: *detect magic, entangle, nettles* x2*
- 2nd: *barkskin, chill metal, minor wounding*, trip*
- 3rd: *awaken dead*, hold animal, pyrotechnics, summon insects x2*
- 4th: *brambles*, hold plant, imprecation*, repel insects*
- 5th: *major wounding*, sticks to snakes, transmute rock to mud, wall of black flame**
- 6th: *black teeth*, summon black flame elemental**

If the PCs defeat the druids in this contest, read the following:

You are in a large room containing several points of interest. Its entirety appears lit by many continual light spells. The ceilings are very high, ranging from 40-60', though of unworked stone unlike the remainder of the room, which is fashioned from worked granite. You note various evil symbols etched into the floor, which you immediately feel an antipathy towards. This appears to be a ritual chamber of some magnitude!

Moving into the room:

As you continue into it, your senses are overwhelmed by the thick smell of incense, votive candles, and other bittersweet essences. There are two altars of stone at the center of the room. On these are flasks, lit incense burners, and brass basins. Much to your revulsion, you note human organs, such as hearts and brains and the like, spread about the room or placed near the altars or upon the symbols. The altars themselves are inlaid with gold representing four symbols: talon, claw, lightning, and cloud. Each is 10' square and has a small set of stairs carved into its southern side that allows access to main altar area, above.

There are a total of four symbol areas containing a set of two symbols each (two each of claw, talon, lightning and cloud). The combined



The Joining (Ritual Overview)

This complex ritual joins some of the Dark God's dream energy to his followers, allowing them to summon creatures as if they were +2 higher in levels and to regenerate hp faster in sleep (3 hp per round, though this will not bring the dead back to life). These powers are usable only if the druid remains within a 300-yard radius of the attuned altar area. Destroying the symbols attuned to the altars has an initial down side for those benefited druids: Their psychic energies are confused for 2d4 days as they reorient to a normal state from their living dream state with the Dark God. This not only cancels the aforementioned benefits, but makes it harder for them to summon creatures (-75% for numbers summoned) and keeps them sleepless for this duration. During this time they lose constitution points at a rate of 1 per day of sleeplessness. These points are afterwards regained at a rate of 1 per day with proper rest. The ritual must be recast every year and a day in order to remain potent. Only the Dark God's participation can give it power.

Note: The Joining ritual allows for several of the Dark God's powers to be joined to his adherents. The full ritual is described in Black Heart, Part 3 of the Dark Quest Series.

symbols attune themselves to the altars as the main part of a special ritual that the Dark God has imparted to the druids known as "The Joining" (see sidebar).

These symbol areas are hedged by *interdict** spells (cast at 18th level); destroying all of the symbols deactivates the altars and cancels the benefits of The Joining, thus crippling the Black Hat sect's ability to summon creatures. This also has the side effect of making it easier for the UMBER EYE sect to achieve its goal of destroying the Black Hats. This effectively reduces the time needed to summon N'Threxus by 20% (see The Battle and the Coming of N'Threxus on p. 5). The druids know when they lose touch with the symbols; this warns Jakust (if he was previously not aware on the party) and he will come forth to battle them. He remains in the south corridor while summoning creatures to attack the party.

Only Hrag, Fevroth, and Jakust, can be encountered here; the remaining Black Hat druids are too occupied with other attacks to withdraw to this room. The remaining implements in the room are valueless.

43. BOLTED IRON DOOR

There is an iron door bolted shut here. The space beyond emits a heavy stench of death even from this side of the door!

The bolt is easily opened from the outside.

44. PRISON ROOM

Prisoners were obviously kept here as a prelude to their being sacrificed in the altar room; their remains were thereafter deposited here. It is a gruesome sight that should make one's blood boil!

45. DOOR WITH SYMBOLS

The door to this room is wooden and carved with the same four symbols you have noted earlier.

This strong door is double-bolted from the other side. It cannot be picked due to the atypical arrangement of the bolts and their locking mechanisms, though opening spells will open it without difficulty. It can also be opened if two characters working in tandem make successful strength-based rolls as determined by the GM.

46. JAKUST'S QUARTERS

You see a spacious room replete with many furnishings. Standing at its center is a black-robed human holding a staff. He mumbles several words as if finishing an incantation.

Jakust was until recently the second-in-command of the Black Hats. When the former High Priest, Krohm Bahdin, fell in combat, Jakust took charge. He is a desperate yet fanatical man who is convinced that the Dark God will finally squash the Umber Eyes for their traitorous actions. He is also convinced that Krohm Bahdin was allowed to die for his inability to keep the divisiveness out of the order and to stop its fractionalization (now 2 years past).

The recent attack by the Umber Eyes is not only interpreted by Jakust as a sacrilege, but as a test visited upon the Dark God's adherents, and thus a temporary act which those faithful must endure.

If Jakust was not alerted by the party's entrance into area 42, then he's still here and immediately combats them. He is in the midst of summoning earth elementals and dragonnes from the staff of summonings and sendings, which he is in turn sending to areas 66 and 67 by rotation. He does this every 15-30 minutes until the charges on the staff are spent. He will complete his very next summoning prior to the first initiative roll, since he is near finishing it upon the PC's entrance. He summons a dragonne to defend him if he is aware of the PC's proximity; if he isn't aware, then the dragonne is "sent" (teleported), much to his dismay. Jakust fights to the death.

Battle Aftermath / Room Details

The room is lavishly decorated with several ermine rugs, two chests, two bureaus of satinwood, a couple of small tables, a reading stand, and several bookcases.

Staff of Summonings and Sendings

Usable by clerics, druids, and magic-users, the staff of summonings and sendings appears as a normal quarterstaff intricately carved with several symbols of monsters and/or animals. It contains 50 charges when newly charged; these charges are used to summon a creature, to bolster its hp with magical energies, to send it to where it needs to be sent, and to keep it upon the current plane for time in excess of its base time. Each staff comes carved with 1d4 symbols representing the monsters or other creatures that are attuned to it; the GM must choose appropriate monsters which can be summoned from each such device. When summoning a staff creature, the wielder repeats the following ritual sentences according to what it is and what powers he wishes to imbue it with.

Example: "I summon you, oh Dragon, with strength and longevity! Go to the waterfall and slay my foes!"

These italicized words not only contain the general wording of the summoning, but the directions for the creature and the use of the staff magic to fortify it. In this case, if the staff indeed held a symbol of a dragon, the wielder would summon it, fortify it with strength (extra hp) and longevity (extra time to complete its quest) and it would go (would be teleported) to the waterfall. Note that if a summonable creature has a personal name that this must be used in order to summon it.

These types of ritual sentences must always be used to summon the staff's creatures. The summoner must emphatically state all key sentence parts. Forgetting to state sentence details is not reversible or amendable, thus the GM must interpret the wording as the PC proceeds with it. Forgetting to state the key word or phrase for "sending" the creature, by example, allows the creature to be summoned, but it will not be teleported. Neither can the staff's magic be used to alter a completed summons. The magic forms while being worded; the aftermath is its immutable result.

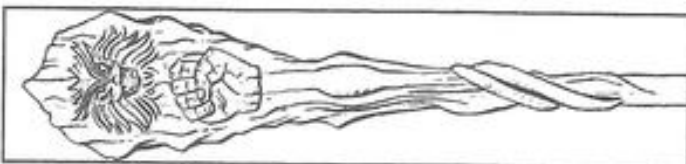
Other than a chest containing 2 potions of extra-healing, a large leather bag filled with 189 pp, and a large iron key, there is nothing of worth here. The key opens the door to the treasury (area 47). The two ermine rugs are soiled and worn and of no value. The books in the bookcases are all esoteric garbage unrelated to this quest.

Jakust (Human Black Hat Dark Druid 14th) - SZ M; AC 9; MV 12"; hp 80; #AT 1; THAC0 12; Dmg 1d6; SA spells; SD druid abilities; AL CE; D 15; W 18; XP 4440. Possessions: Staff of summonings and sendings (22 charges, summons dragonnes and 16 HD earth elementals, see sidebar), amulet of proof against detection and location.

Joining ritual powers within 300 yards of area 42: Summons as 16th-level; regenerates during sleep; drawbacks if canceled; see sidebar.

- 1st: darkbranch*, entangle, frighten animals*, invisibility to animals
- 2nd: charm person or mammal, minor wounding*, obscurement, unseelie fire*
- 3rd: contagion*, poison, snare, withstand heat*
- 4th: brambles*, dispel magic, summon animal* x2
- 5th: animal growth, insect plague x2, major wounding* x2
- 6th: summon black flame elemental*, turn wood, wall of thorns
- 7th: profanation*, tremor*

Dragonne - SZ L; AC 6/2; MV 15"/9"; HD 9; hp 46; #AT 3; THAC0 12; Dmg 1d8/1d8/3d6; SA roar; AL N; XP 2044; MM p. 34.



Each listed use expends one charge, and adds one round of time to complete the summoning. In the above example, four charges are expended, and the summoning takes four rounds. A summoning can use fewer than four charges but cannot exceed this number. Note that only one creature may be summoned and sent to one place only per single summoning. This would, by itself, expend two charges; two additional charges (at the summoner's discretion) could be used to complement the creature's length of stay and hp, thus twice fortifying the creature with additional hp, or with twice the additional time to accomplish its task, for example. Or, the summoner could summon a creature while fortifying it with extra hp three times, etc., but he would not be sending it anywhere.

The summoned creature remains for a number of rounds equal to the summoner's charisma x2, unless the duration is extended with additional charges.

- **Summon** — The creature appears within 1d6 x 10' of the summoner, depending on its size; if a sending was used in the sentence, it appears only for a second before being teleported. Note that summoning creatures of greater size than can fit into the current area the summoner occupies foils the summoning and all expended charges are lost.
- **Send** — Up to miles equal to the summoner's intelligence; 20 miles maximum, without error, though the sender must have seen the place.
- **Strength** — +10% hp; maximum of three charges expended for +30% of original hp.
- **Longevity** — Each charge (up to three) adds rounds equal to the summoner's charisma divided by 2.

47. IRON DOOR

You see an iron door to your west. It has a large keyhole but no handle.

This large iron door can be opened by using the key found in Jakust's quarters (area 46). The key must be turned half a revolution counter-clockwise, whereupon it stops. There is a clicking sound of tumblers moving. The door can then be safely opened by pulling upon the key, as it is now a makeshift handle. Rotating the key half a revolution clockwise locks the key in place and sets off a magical trap, which is beforehand undetectable by thieves as it is inert until set by the tumblers moving into place during the last 1/32nd of an inch prior to completing the key's incorrect rotation. Using detection magic on the door for 3 rounds reveals an inert elemental magic near the keyhole.

Once the trap is sprung, the tumblers slowly move the key back to its starting position over the next 4 minutes. The door is then ready for another attempt to unlock it. If the PCs try to break down the door, there is a 50% chance that the trap is triggered each time the door is struck. There is a corresponding chance that this damage actually destroys the tumbler mechanism, which thereafter makes the lock unopenable with the key. Breaking the tumbler also deactivates the magical trap, as it no longer has a triggering device.

48. TREASURY

This room is filled with chests, urns, boxes, coffers, crates and a desk.

The desk contains ledgers indicating the amounts and types of monetary treasure stored here. Note that the 3 magic items are not listed. There are as many gold and silver coins as the party can carry plus these additional items:

- small chest: 2 side pouches containing 20 gems each (100 gp each)
- small urn: 300 pp and 3 pieces of jewelry worth 500 gp each
- small crate: *splint mail armor* +3 (man-sized)
- small box: *ring of spell turning* hidden beneath a pile of 100 gp
- small coffer: *scroll (Bigby's crushing hand, control water, and hold monster)* set atop of 200 cp

49. WOODEN DOOR WITH SIGN

You stop before a wooden door that has a sign above it. The sign seems recently made and is hastily inscribed with the words "The Dead."

50. BLACK HAT CASUALTIES

Within this room the PCs note dead bodies, laid out in a respectable, orderly fashion. All appear in dress of the Black Hat sect and all are recently (within 1 or 2 days) deceased. If the PCs check the bodies they note the following:

There is no overwhelming cause of death here; some appear bludgeoned by massive blows which crushed vital areas, others appear severely burnt, while others have no marks upon them at all. It is clear that these men faced their opponents while dying, as there are no marks upon their backs.

You also find a note on one of the bodies:

"Nveg —

Make sure that our summoned creatures do not wander too far to the east in the Gulf, for the twain are astir, waiting for our foul attackers to wander that direction. They will not immediately distinguish between them or us at this point!

— Jakust"

51. CHAMBER OF WOOD

This large chamber is filled with beams, planks, buckets containing iron and wooden nails, hammers, and many other common items related to the carpenter's craft. Set upon a table near the room's center is a wooden miniature of a temple. Like a dollhouse, its levels are detachable to make the inner details of its minute design easily viewable.

This material is perhaps intended to be used to construct a temple, as suggested by the miniature. As you peruse the temple floors you note a single altar sculpted onto its uppermost one, with a collapsible ceiling open to the sky. The altar is painted in black with minute gold lettering: "The Dark God." There are unfamiliar runic patterns surrounding this altar, and a singular stone dais earmarked for an item only named "Darkness Urn" nearby. There is no urn upon it, however. The walls of this level are actually inlaid with a dark, porous rock, perhaps of igneous extrusion.

Whoever sculpted this rock to fit the miniature must surely have used magic, as the rock is less than a fingernail's width (when scrutinized from various angles) and would have broken through normal stone-crafting methods.

Overall this miniature is unfinished, though the altar level appears near complete. You estimate that this structure, if built, could house many hundreds and would encompass over 20,000 sq. ft. per level.

The miniature can be taken with the party if they desire it. It measures 12" on either side and is 12" high. It weighs 4 lbs. The runes on the temple floor are gibberish. There is nothing else to learn from this other than this sect, probably the Black Hats, had intentions of raising a temple in the near future, and was nearing realizing this goal as demonstrated by the accumulation of materials on hand here. There is no clue here as to where it was to be built.

52. LESSER NOISES OF BATTLE

PCs who listen from this area hear the many sounds of combat taking place at the Gulf: explosions, screeches from inhuman creatures, etc. If the PCs already listened from area 39, any listener has a 3-in-6 chance (modified for high intelligence) of determining that the sounds are not as ever present on this side of the Gulf.

53. TEMPORARY TOMB / DRUID QUARTERS

This large room is lit by many sconces in the northeast corner. In fact there appears to be a sarcophagus near these, set in such a way so as to properly light it for viewers. This light also reveals a few cots to the south, further away from the sarcophagus, and next to these are several trunks.

The sarcophagus is sealed with wax and iron strips to make it airtight, though it is not difficult to break open.

Inside the sarcophagus is a recently killed human attired in the Black Hat mode. He is very tall, bearded and wears special vestments which you have not noted before. It appears that he died from a massive amount of blood loss, though no wounds are apparent.

The person carrying the *Tarrasque Spike* must roll a check against his intelligence score. Success indicates that he is aware that this man's spirit is one of those he believes he can communicate with through the spike, but is not wholly sure about this fact. Failure indicated that the PC gets an odd feeling about this fellow, but no more.

The dead man is Krohm Bahdin, the former High Priest of the Black Hat sect. He was slain several days ago while battling Heshmat. His items were taken by Jakust (the *staff of summonings and sendings*) and Lorga (a *ring of free action*). The druids did their best to arrange a

fitting interment for their former leader considering the constraints involved with fighting off the Umber Eyes while doing so.

The cots and trunks are used by the two druids – Naklyd and Xomp – who are currently battling their enemies at the Gulf, area 67. There are no possessions here and nothing else of interest or worth.

54. DEMON SUMMONING AREA

This chamber smells of decay admixed with sweet incense. A continual light spell illuminates an area above a large slab of black rock (5' in circumference, 6" high). There are four brass incense burners set near and around the slab. These burners emit the sweet aroma.

Upon closer inspection you note that the slab is divided into unequal quadrants by lines of dried blood. Contained in each of these apportioned areas is a single feather — one each of blue, black, grey and red. The feathers, or perhaps even the slab itself, seem to be the source of the decay you smell.

This arrangement will smack of a temporary summoning portal to those PCs experienced in casting summoning spells. In fact this is exactly its purpose. When N'Threxus is summoned, he can empower the portal, allowing up to 10 Type I demons (vlocks) per feather to enter through it. See the *Claw of N'Threxus* sidebar.

GM Note: N'Threxus is honoring Hesmat's request to relay to him power to defeat his enemies ever since he slew Krohm Bahdin, the Black Hats' leader. This is the reason for the altar's preparedness in advance of N'Threxus' summons.

55. HESMAT THE DREAD HIEROPHANT

GM Note: This whole area is sealed by *interdict**. There are cave bats (non-attack, messengers only) above, which immediately inform Hesmat, High Priest to N'Threxus, about intruders entering this room.

As you approach this room you see familiar symbols engraved upon the floor just inside the entrance. As you stop to ascertain what they are, you then hear the sounds of flapping wings, ahead of you and inside the room.

The PC's must somehow defeat the *interdict** spell or bypass it. One round after they enter this room, Hesmat is informed of their presence by the bats. On the second round, Hesmat attacks with his *umber rain** spell, and seeks his best options thereafter.

You see a man in black robes and the hat of an Umber Eye druid. He holds a clawed weapon in one hand and wields a mace in the other.

Final Options: Hesmat doesn't wish to die, but he is so assured of victory that he has no prepared spells to escape with. Thus if things go bad for him in this encounter he fights as best as he can, calling upon N'Threxus to aid him (unfortunately he will receive no help).

Hesmat (Human Umber Eye Dark Druid 16th) – SZ M; AC 5; MV 12"; hp 91; #AT 1; THAC0 10; Dmg 1d6+5; SA spells; SD druid abilities, spell immunities (19 wisdom); AL CE; W 19; D 17; XP 5820. Possessions: *Claw of N'Threxus* (see sidebar), *cloak of displacement*, *footman's mace* +4, *oil of impact* (2 uses). As a Dread Hierophant, he can also cast spells normally permitted only to Black Hat druids.

- 1st: *detect magic*, *rain of sparks** x3, *talon rod**
- 2nd: *charm person* or *mammal*, *heat metal*, *phantasmagoria**, *unseelie fire**
- 3rd: *contagion** x2, *neutralize poison*, *snare*, *water breathing*
- 4th: *dispel magic*, *imprecation**, *repel insects*, *summon animal**
- 5th: *entropy**, *insect plague*, *sticks to snakes*, *wall of smoke**
- 6th: *animal summoning III*, *feeblemind*, *spores of N'Threxus**, *summon black flame elemental**, *summon dust elemental**
- 7th: *dark storm**, *finger of death*, *profanation**, *umber rain**

Claw of N'Threxus (Major Artifact)

The Claw of N'Threxus appears to be the claw of a Type I demon (vlock). Its shaft is part leg and part plumage of various colored feathers. There are a total of 8 feathers present: 2 each of the colors red, blue, gray and black. This artifact is given as a prize by N'Threxus to his most valued mortal servant. If that servant dies, the claw teleports back to N'Threxus. It is a personal artifact that cannot be duplicated. With it, the bearer can perform the following powers:

Fashion Summoning Altar: Twice per year, the claw can be used to mark off an area where an ethereal altar will take material form. It takes 2d6 days to accomplish the ritual, then 1d6 days for the altar to manifest. During this manifestation, the altar appears semi-corporeal and can be attacked to dispel it (any cleric or druid of good or neutral ethical outlook or alignment can do this, although he will be subject to a curse if he does not take adequate precaution). Once its materialization is complete, N'Threxus can be summoned through it.

Summon N'Threxus: This requires the altar (above) and nonliving or living sacrifices being offered to this foul demon every hour for hours equal to 20 minus the summoner's charisma rating. (Example: Having an 18 charisma would require offering 2 sacrifices over 2 hours.) N'Threxus then manifests on the altar. He can only be kept on the current plane through death and destruction as initiated and/or guided by the summoner himself. This requires at least 50 levels of slain intelligent (intelligence of 3 or more) beings/day. Failing to achieve this goal enrages the demon and it departs the current plane. There is a 6-month waiting period between summoning N'Threxus and re-summoning him.

Feather Tokens: If summoned and fed up to 300 slain levels, N'Threxus will gladly inform his servant about the ritual to summon vulture-demons. By taking feathers from the claw (these re-grow as at a rate of 1/day as long as N'Threxus remains upon the summoner's plane), these can be placed upon a slab of stone no less than 5' in circumference. The stone's surface must be divided into quadrants by blood and a single feather placed within each quadrant. For every 30 slain levels thereafter offered to the demon, 10 Type I demons (vlocks) will appear, burning a feather during the process. These remain under the summoner's control until ordered hence, killed, or upon N'Threxus leaving the current plane. In all of the above cases the demons then disappear.

Teleportation Link: The claw wielder may teleport, without any chance of error, to the main altar, though this translation is not instantaneous due to the altar's original ethereality. Teleporting to the altar takes 1d6 rounds. N'Threxus has found this power useful in having his servant deliver to him the bodies of the slain sacrifices.



56. ENTRANCED FIGHTERS

You enter a large room containing nearly a dozen figures in armor. They appear to have been gathered around in a circle prior to seeing you, but they quickly break the circle, draw their swords and attack.

These fighters are personal retainers of Hesmat. Though already faithful and fanatic followers, he has charmed or enchanted them over and over again, in effect entrancing them. They have been ordered to remain in this room to await the coming of N'Threxus. Due to their charmed/entranced state, coupled with their fanaticism and passionate images of future victory, they cannot be affected by mind influencing spells.

Entranced Fighters (10) (Human Fighter 5th) – SZ M; AC 3; MV 9"; hp 40 each; #AT 1; THAC0 16; Dmg 1d8+1; SD entranced state negates mind-influencing effects; AL CN; S 16; D 15; XP 390. Possessions: Longsword, chain mail, medium shield.



57. EARTHEN COHORTS

You see a large mass of rock lumbering towards you as you enter this room.

This room is occupied by earthen servants who will spring into action upon Hesmat's command. The earth elemental currently has engorged the stone of elemental entrenchment (see sidebar), and is under the command of Hesmat. If it is killed, it disgorges the stone, with 6 charges remaining. A careful search is required to note the stone amongst the other earthen material as the elemental dies.

The mephits form up behind the earth elemental, preferring to dart out from their concealed positions only after the elemental melees, or when they are forced to. They retain their distance between attackers when possible, using their breath weapons to cause damage.

Earth Elemental – SZ L; AC 2; MV 6"; HD 12; hp 68; #AT 1; THAC0 9; Dmg 4d8; SA full damage vs. creatures on the ground, -2 per die against others; SD hit only by +2 or better weapons; AL N; XP 3870; MM p. 38.

Earth Mephits (6) – SZ M; AC 6; MV 12"/24"; HD 3; hp 16 each; #AT 2; THAC0 16; Dmg 1d3; SA breath weapon of rock shards (10' range, 1d6 damage, no save), summon earth mephits; SD regenerates 2 hp per round while in contact with earth/stone; AL NE; XP 153; FF p. 64 (modified lava mephit with no heat-related abilities).

58. ALTAR OF N'THREXUS

Upon entering this chamber you immediately stop. Before you is a strange sight: A 6' round slab of semi-transparent granite is floating 2' off the ground. Just looking at it makes you nauseous, though there is no apparent reason for this.

This is the altar of N'Threxus, which is manifesting through the magic of the *Claw of N'Threxus* that Hesmat (area 55) wields. If the PCs view this altar for more than 3 rounds, they must make saves vs. poison to resist *contagion*®. They also note that during this time, part of the altar becomes more solid, as if it were slowly manifesting on this plane.

The altar is semi-corporeal and can be attacked and dispelled (any cleric or druid of good or neutral ethical outlook or alignment can do this, although he will be subject to a curse if he does not take adequate precaution), but attacking it will immediately warn Hesmat, and he will arrive at this chamber by the fastest means (using the claw to travel to the altar 1d6 rounds later).

If the altar is destroyed, N'Threxus' summoning is postponed 2d6 days – the time it takes for Hesmat to use the *Claw of N'Threxus* to form another altar image. Failure to destroy this altar must be assessed using those guidelines detailed in the section, *The Battle and the Coming of N'Threxus* on p. 5.

59. THE MIRROR SEER

GM Note: The following encounter is a "Mirror, Mirror, on the wall. Who's the fairest of them all?" encounter. Have lots of fun with it.

You enter a chamber and immediately note a shining figure standing within a red circle near the southern wall. It appears to be insubstantial, even ghostly.

Approaching the figure:

The figure doesn't move or react to your presence. In fact it turns its back and ignores you!

This spirit was summoned by Hesmat to bolster his unending worship of himself. It is a mere apparition, which can neither attack or be attacked. Touching the circle will release it and it immediately disappears.

If asked questions, the shade must respond to them, but it always does so in the form of a compliment, like a "yes-man" would, with feigned sincerity. It has no other information or purpose. In its former life it was a brown-noser working for a large mercantile establishment.

Stone of Elemental Entrenchment

This stone appears as a lump of raw coal. It is used in conjunction with summoning an earth elemental. When the elemental is summoned, the coal is offered to it (save vs. spells for the elemental to resist it, as it finds it enticing). Failing the save means the elemental engorges it. The properties of the stone then manifest, rooting the elemental to the current plane until it is killed or ordered hence. In either case the stone is disgorged. The stone has 2d6 charges upon being found. Every use expends a charge.

There are other stones of this type rumored to exist, some with more extraordinary powers, but all designed to lengthen the stay of summoned elementals.



60. CHAMBER OF HOWLS

This room is much like any of the others that you've seen, but it seems colder. As you enter it a fierce draft assails you and you draw close your loose garments to fight off the chill.

Walking 20' into the room:

Upon walking further into the room, the draft turns into a howling wind. The very ceiling seems crawling with currents of wind, winding above and around you like an alien tempest!

This spiritual wind's origins are not determinable, but it creates a howling which causes fear (at the 12th level of ability) in anyone as long as they remain in this chamber.

This room is cursed. The spirits are those of dead slaves who were killed en masse by a cave-in while excavating this area. Their bodies were left beneath the rubble and the chamber was built on top of them.

No dispelling magic will work to remove this awful curse, as the spirits call out for the blood of their former masters who were so cruel to them. Only the death of this entire cult will release them from this plane.

61. POTION STORAGE

This room contains several cabinets and a table full of empty bottles. Set near the table are two boxes.

The boxes contain ingredients and simple utensils for making elixirs. The Umber Eye druids mix new elixirs here when they can. There are 10 elixirs stored in the cabinets: Two each of *potions of longevity, climbing, growth, flying, and levitation*.

62. UMBER EYE TREASURY

The floor of this room is covered in dirt. By the look of it, this was ported here and is not natural to the room.

As the players assess the dirt, the two invisible stalkers here are assessing them – from behind if they are more than 10' into the room already. If they make any move towards the center of the room, the stalkers attack from behind, surprising the PCs.

The room is a makeshift treasury for the Umber Eye sect. Buried 10' below ground at the center of the room is a large chest containing the following:

- 2500 sp
- 2000 gp
- 400 pp
- 20 gems (100 gp each)
- jewel-encrusted dagger +2
- composite longbow of freezing +3, +6 vs. fire-using/dwelling creatures

The GM must decide how long it will take to find the chest, depending upon the number of PCs digging.

Invisible Stalkers (2) – SZ L; AC 3; MV 12"; HD 8; hp 40 each; #AT 1; THAC0 12; Dmg 4d4; SA surprise on 1-5; SD invisibility, 30% magic resistance; AL N; XP 1490; MM p. 55.

63. DRUID QUARTERS

This chamber is unoccupied. It contains two cots and a chest, the latter appearing flung open and ransacked.

This is Khav's and Gorintz's room, two Umber Eye druids who are currently involved battling their enemies at the Gulf (area 69). The chest contains nothing but spare clothing. Khav kept his magic items within it. When the battle began, he quickly searched for them, thus the chest's appearance.



64. DRUID QUARTERS

This chamber is unoccupied. It contains two cots and a large trunk.

This is Yragher's and Oules's room, two Umber Eye druids who are currently involved battling their enemies at the Gulf (area 68). The trunk contains a deck of cards, 2 golden rings (non-magical, but worth 10 gp each), a bracelet etched with some foreign language (GMs must decide on an obscure language that the party would not know), and several robes. The trunk also has a hidden side panel near the outside bottom, right side. If the panel is removed, an *ivory moth* (see sidebar) belonging to Oules is revealed. He had intended on using it to navigate the Gulf if the battle goes against them.

Ivory Moth – This statuette is carved from ivory and is about the same size as an ordinary moth. Once the command word is spoken, the moth becomes animated and grows (in 1 segment of time) to the size of a small pony. It can be used as a mount (equivalent to a gryphon) but cannot attack. The item can be used 3 times per week, but only once per day, for up to 12 hours per use. When 12 hours have passed or when the command word is spoken, the *ivory moth* reverts to its statuette form. It cannot be re-animated until the following day.

OVERVIEW OF THE GULF AND ADJOINING AREAS

The Gulf is a very complicated adventure area. There are no less than 5 keyed areas within/overlooking it, and others which affect it, such as Jakust at area 46 summoning creatures and sending them to areas 66 and 67. The Gulf also has two guardians (at area 70) and there is a rite that allows its magical path to be activated. In all, this is a place of action and death.

As a GM you will want to read the aforementioned areas and a few more as well to get a total grasp on how to handle the battles and encounters at the Gulf. Unfortunately, the battles, for the most part, will have to be concluded as background to the main adventure, for there is a fair chance that the PCs could elect to avoid confrontation by moving directly toward area 71. The battles become moot points after the PCs successfully conclude that encounter. However, getting to that area is another problem altogether, as the PCs must travel the magical path in order to arrive there. This will make them vulnerable to attacks from both sects, though the Black Hat members are less likely to do anything about this as they could assume that the PCs are members of their own sect traveling the path to the antechamber to secure help from the Dark God. If they are aware of intruders, however, this might not be their reaction to this, so such situations must be resolved on a case-by-case basis.

65. THE GULF (AND MAGICAL PATH)

The Gulf is a very large crater set in the middle of this level. Its composition is of some volcanic rock, indicating that this stronghold indeed sits upon an ancient (and unknown) and possibly extinct volcano. The ceiling rises to its greatest height near the center (about 150' from ground level) and the pit itself extends downwards hundreds of feet into the darkness below. Lighting in the Gulf is problematic. There is no light source here, except for what is generated by the druids in combat, and these magical sources tend to be dispelled on a regular basis. Thus concealment is 90% (near total darkness) unless situations change this.

The Magical Path

If the PCs perform the intonation described in the Rite of Passage (from area 38) upon reaching the Gulf at any of its main entry points, a golden translucent path, 3' wide, appears. The words must be continually intoned to keep the path functional, during which time the PCs walking upon it do not fall. Interrupting the intonation for more than 1 round dispels the path, and all those upon it at that time fall into the Gulf.

The path conforms to the shape of the Gulf, in essence creating a magical ledge encircling the inside of it. The only difference in the path's symmetry is towards the east-northeast, at area 70, where it appears to dip for some distance before rising again and turning back south to complete its circuit. Also note that the magical path allows a circuitous route to the north and south sides of the Gulf, and that this could be taken advantage of by one or both of the opposing sides, either to attack each other with ground creatures, or in order to stop the adventurers from using the path. However, none of the sect members themselves are likely to tread upon it knowing full well that at any moment it could be made to disappear!

66. RITUAL PLATFORM (with Black Hats)

You enter onto a large platform overlooking the Gulf to the south.

The platform is approximately 90' x 40' and ringed on the three outward facing sides with balustrades of granite ornately carved with the four symbols common to this cult. The balustrades are about 3' high, which allows the druids behind them to duck down out of sight

Current Situation

There is a stalemate in progress by the time the PCs reach the Gulf; this is at least the Black Hats' point of view. The Umber Eye sect is far from stalemated. They have slain the Black Hats' religious leader, Krohm Bahdin, and are in the midst of summoning N'Threxus. All they have to do is wait their opponents out while keeping them busy and they win (see The Battle and the Coming of N'Threxus on p. 5).

Battle Lines

The two opposing sides are drawn up opposite each other in good old-fashioned battle lines. From their vantage points upon the ceremonial summoning ledges, each side hurls spells at the other, they summon creatures which can fly or otherwise use spells or ranged weapons and magic themselves, and summon defensive powers or stratagems to counter any attacks. The Umber Eye sect has superior numbers and a wider range of usable (illusionist) spells just right for this type of battle. However, the Black Hat sect is summoning dragonnes, which are appearing about every 15-30 minutes (from area 46). These tend to use their roar and totally confound the attackers and then take back momentum the Umber Eye sect has gained (mostly positioning). And so it has gone on like this for days now, with no end in sight. At least, none that is sensed by the Black Hats...

and spring back into view when necessary. When a druid is standing, they count as 25% cover for defensive purposes.

This platform is occupied by the Black Hat druids Lorga and Calia. They attack anyone and anything that does not refer to them by name before entering the platform. They are very resourceful characters who have withstood on their own the various attacks lodged against them from areas 68 and 69. There is a 5% chance per minute that the PCs remain here (with a 100% chance on the 10th minute) that a single dragonne teleports in from area 46. If the dragonne appears, then another one will not appear again at either this area or area 46 for 15-30 minutes. It assists the druids in combat if there are intruders already present; otherwise it flies to either area 68 or 69 (50% chance for each) to combat the Umber Eye druids there.

Lorga (Human Black Hat Dark Druid 12th) – SZ M; AC 8; MV 12"; hp 67; #AT 1; THAC0 14; Dmg 1d4; SA spells; SD druid abilities; AL CE; I 16; W 18; XP 3222. Possessions: *Ring of free action*, *potion of invisibility*, dagger, club.
Joining ritual powers within 300 yards of area 42: Summons as 14th-level; regenerates during sleep; drawbacks if canceled; see p. 26.

- 1st: *darkbranch**, *detect magic* x2, *speak with animals*
- 2nd: *chill metal*, *minor wounding** x2, *trip*
- 3rd: *awaken dead**, *contagion**, *stone shape*, *summon insects*
- 4th: *dispel magic* x2, *imprecation**, *summon animal**
- 5th: *insect plague*, *rebuke good**, *transmute rock to mud*, *wall of black flame**
- 6th: *feeblemind*, *summon black flame elemental**

Calia (Human Black Hat Dark Druid 12th) – SZ M; AC 6; MV 12"; hp 60; #AT 1; THAC0 14; Dmg 1d4; SA spells; SD druid abilities; AL CE; I 16; W 18; XP 3110. Possessions: *Ring of protection* +2, *potion of extra-healing*, and a *scroll (transmute rock to mud and anti-animal shell)*, dagger, club.
Joining ritual powers within 300 yards of area 42: Summons as 14th-level; regenerates during sleep; drawbacks if canceled; see p. 26.

- 1st: *darkbranch**, *nettle**, *spoil fodder** x2
- 2nd: *minor wounding**, *obscurment*, *trip*, *unseelie fire**
- 3rd: *contagion**, *hold animal*, *pyrotechnics*, *summon insects*
- 4th: *brambles**, *imprecation**, *repel insects*, *summon animal**
- 5th: *insect plague*, *major wounding**, *wall of black flame** x2
- 6th: *summon black flame elemental**, *turn wood*

67. RITUAL PLATFORM (with Black Hats)

You enter onto a large platform overlooking the Gulf to the west.

This platform is occupied by the Black Hat druids Naklyd and Xomp. They use *awaken dead** against the PCs if any are slain. Otherwise the details are equivalent to area 66.

Naklyd (Human Black Hat Dark Druid 12th) – SZ M; AC 8; MV 12"; hp 67; #AT 1; THAC0 14; Dmg 1d4; SA spells; SD druid abilities; AL CE; I 16; W 18; XP 3222. Possessions: *Potion of speed*, *potion of levitation*, *ring of blending* (see sidebar), dagger, club. Joining ritual powers within 300 yards of area 42: Summons as 14th-level; regenerates during sleep; drawbacks if canceled; see p. 26.

- 1st: *darkbranch**, *entangle*, *frighten animals**, *nettle**
- 2nd: *charm person or mammal* x2, *unseelie fire**, *vinculum**
- 3rd: *awaken dead** x2, *neutralize poison*, *snare*
- 4th: *control temperature* 10' radius, *imprecation**,
*summon animal** x2
- 5th: *sticks to snakes* x2, *wall of black flame** x2
- 6th: *summon black flame elemental**, *wall of thorns*

Xomp (Human Black Hat Dark Druid 12th) – SZ M; AC 8; MV 12"; hp 60; #AT 1; THAC0 14; Dmg 1d4; SA spells; SD druid abilities; AL CE; I 16; W 18; XP 3110. Possessions: *Potion of speed*, *potion of flying*, *scroll (cure critical wounds)*, *weather summoning*, and *insect plague*), dagger, club. Joining ritual powers within 300 yards of area 42: Summons as 14th-level; regenerates during sleep; drawbacks if canceled; see p. 26.

- 1st: *darkbranch**, *frighten animals**, *invisibility to animals*,
*spoil fodder**
- 2nd: *heat metal* x2, *obscurement*, *unseelie fire**
- 3rd: *awaken dead** x2, *contagion**, *neutralize poison*
- 4th: *dispel magic*, *produce fire*, *summon animal** x2
- 5th: *anti-plant shell*, *insect plague*, *transmute rock to mud*,
*wall of black flame**
- 6th: *feblemind*, *turn wood*

Ring of Blending – Allows the wearer to blend into his surroundings so that he goes unnoticed 75% of the time.



68. RITUAL PLATFORM (with UMBER EYES)

You enter onto a large platform overlooking the Gulf to the east.

This platform is occupied by the UMBER Eye druids Yragher and Oulless. They attack anyone and anything that enters the platform, as they are to be informed of any such visitation (by animal messenger) beforehand.

Yragher (Human UMBER Eye Dark Druid 11th) – SZ M; AC 7; MV 12"; hp 50; #AT 1; THAC0 14; Dmg 1d4; SA spells; SD druid abilities; AL CE; I 16; W 18; XP 2950. Possessions: *Ring of protection* +1 (made from a white dragon scale), *oil of impact* (1 use), dagger, club.

- 1st: *detect magic*, *frighten animals**, *rain of sparks**, *talon rod**
- 2nd: *charm person or mammal*, *phantasmagoria** x2,
*unseelie fire**
- 3rd: *darkcloak**, *neutralize poison*, *pyrotechnics*, *summon insects*
- 4th: *dispel magic*, *repel insects*, *summon animal** x2
- 5th: *entropy** x2, *insect plague*
- 6th: *summon dust elemental**

Oulless (Human UMBER Eye Dark Druid 11th) – SZ M; AC 7; MV 12"; hp 50; #AT 1; THAC0 14; Dmg 1d4+1; SA spells; SD druid abilities; AL CE; W 17; XP 2950. Possessions: *Ring of protection* +1, *potion of growth*, *oil of impact* (1 use), dagger +1.

- 1st: *detect magic*, *rain of sparks** x3
- 2nd: *charm person or mammal* x2, *obscurement*, *trip*
- 3rd: *contagion**, *darkcloak**, *summon insects*, *withstand heat**
- 4th: *control temperature* 10' radius, *protection from lightning*,
repel insects, *summon animal** x2
- 5th: *major wounding** x2
- 6th: *spores of N'Thexus**



69. RITUAL PLATFORM (with UMBER EYES)

You enter onto a large platform overlooking the Gulf to the north.

This platform is occupied by the UMBER Eye druids Khav and Gorintz. Otherwise the details are equivalent to area 68.

Khav (Human UMBER Eye Dark Druid 11th) – SZ M; AC 7; MV 12"; hp 50; #AT 1; THAC0 14; Dmg 1d4; SA spells; SD druid abilities; AL CE; I 16; W 18; XP 2950. Possessions: *Ring of protection* +1, *oil of impact* (1 use), *potion of climbing*, dagger, club.

- 1st: *rain of sparks**, *spoil fodder**, *talon rod** x2
- 2nd: *minor wounding**, *phantasmagoria**, *trip*, *warp wood*
- 3rd: *contagion** x2, *summon insects*, *withstand heat**
- 4th: *dispel magic*, *hold plant*, *repel insects*, *summon animal** x2
- 5th: *entropy**, *insect plague*, *major wounding**
- 6th: *summon dust elemental**

Gorintz (Human UMBER Eye Dark Druid 11th) – SZ M; AC 7; MV 12"; hp 50; #AT 1; THAC0 14; Dmg 1d4; SA spells; SD druid abilities; AL CE; W 17; XP 2950. Possessions: *Ring of protection* +1, *potion of levitation*, *oil of impact* (1 use), dagger, club.

- 1st: *invisibility to animals*, *rain of sparks** x2, *talon rod**
- 2nd: *chill metal*, *phantasmagoria**, *trip* x2
- 3rd: *contagion**, *darkcloak**, *neutralize poison*, *stone shape*
- 4th: *control temperature* 10' radius, *summon animal** x4
- 5th: *control winds*, *insect plague*, *wall of smoke**
- 6th: *summon dust elemental**

70. THE TWAIN

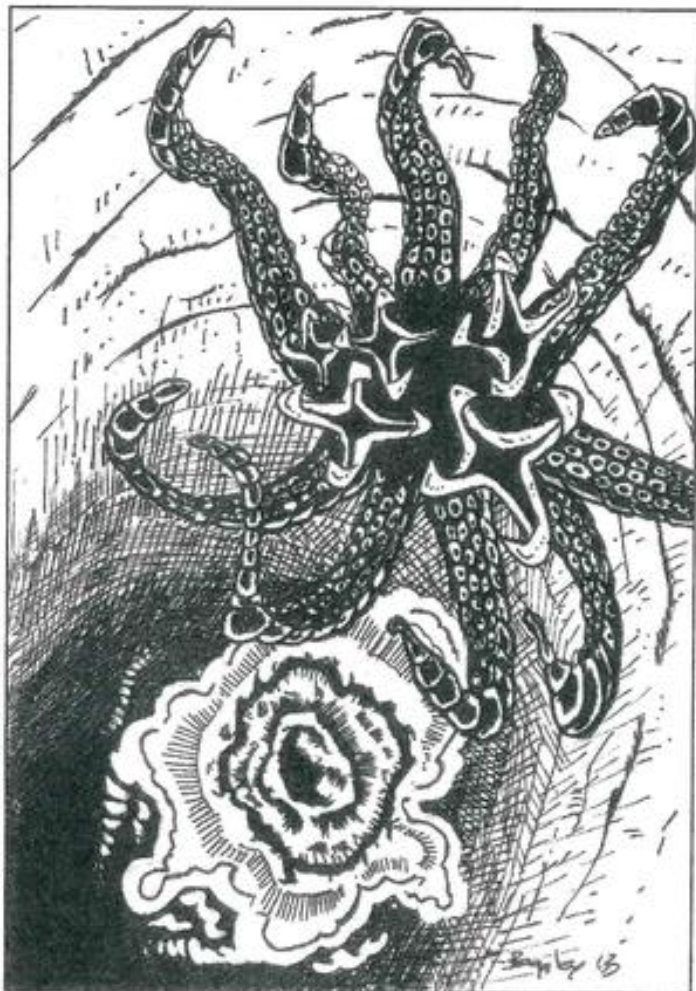
Characters traveling upon the magical path will eventually arrive in the northeast portion of the Gulf approximately 60' above the passage depicted on the map. Here they will be confronted by two apparitions, which appear out of the Gulf's depths and float quickly towards them (fly 36", maneuverability class A).

They must quickly offer both fire and blood to these apparitions, or else they become real (in the PC's mind, no chance to disbelieve) and attack. In fact these are shadow evocations of a strange and powerful sort as summoned by the Dark God. The dark druids refer to them only as the "Twain."

Upon successfully sacrificing to the Twain, the path reshapes itself. It angles downward and to a before unseen cave mouth (the passage shown on the map). The Twain will then disappear into the depths below, never to be seen by this group of PCs again.

Tentacles and Claws: The first apparition appears as all tentacles and claws. It automatically pursues and attacks beings within the Gulf. It cannot be struck in melee, cannot be dispelled or otherwise affected by spells, but it can be outrun, as it will not pursue beyond the limits of the Gulf. It can remain for only 4 minutes if it is farther than 60' away from here; thereafter it must return to this area or in 1d6 rounds disappear. Its combined claw/tentacle attacks deal 4d12 damage per round. It must be offered the blood sacrifice (a live PC).

Fire and Cloud: The second apparition appears as all flames and billowing smoke clouds. Its combined fire and smoke attack deals 5d10 points of damage per round. It must be offered the fire sacrifice (magical fire). Otherwise as above.



71. THE DARK GOD'S ANTECHAMBER

Upon entering the cave mouth you find yourself in a dimly lit chamber, irradiated by the strange walls before you.

North — Fire Wall: This appears as a mass of broiling flame that does not breach the room's plane.

South — Blood Wall: This appears as a bubbling mass of blood that does not break the room's plane.

East — Dark Wall: This is pitch-black like the Void.

You immediately hear a voice, distant and faint: "Take back what you've offered."

This refers to that part of the Rite of Passage which the PCs may not have figured out. But in essence, they must attack the north and south walls and destroy them.

Fire Wall — AC 0; hp 150; SD fire immunity. When touched or struck in melee or by ranged weapons or spells that do damage, the wall responds by dealing 3d8 fire damage to each attacker who damaged it in that round.

Blood Wall — AC 0; hp 150; SD: ½ damage from cold. This equates to a wall of water. When touched or struck in melee or by ranged weapons or spells that deal damage, the wall responds by dealing 3d8 slam damage to each attacker who damaged it in that round.

As a wall is "killed" the PCs see it sucked into the black wall. Upon both walls being dispatched, the PCs hear that voice again. It is much stronger now:

"You have done well. I can help you in your quest if you complete one for me. The spike is the key to your success. Agree to return it to its owner and I will help you."

If the PCs pause too long in consideration, prompt them:

"The way is clear; I cannot help you unless you agree to complete my quest. Will you agree? I shall destroy the dark priests above if you agree."

If the PCs agree, they are then *geased* (at the 20th level of ability) to return the spike to its rightful owner, which will be made known to them upon visiting him, whoever "him" is. They must proceed down into the Gulf and then to him (part of the continuing adventures in the Dark Quest series). The GM should decide on appropriate penalties for PCs who fail to return the spike to its owner.

If they reject his entreat, the dark wall goes deathly black and emits no more faint light. The chamber is pitch-black now. Only seconds later the PCs start feeling the results of explosions above as the chamber reverberates some. A piece of stone falls from the ceiling. It may be time to depart.

As they exit the chamber they hear, as well as see, many fiery explosions above, the collapsing of stone, the destruction of the evil cult they came to destroy themselves. The PCs must be able to navigate down into the Gulf, for fly they must, and going back is no longer an option... As they proceed downward they start to feel sick (a *contagion** taking form, as the Dark God has cursed them).

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

As outlined earlier the PCs are trapped between two opposing forces. If they survive this encounter they will eventually find themselves at the bottom of the Gulf – their only choice of direction. Their surroundings are such: Darkness, subterranean rock (apparently solidified magma to anyone with the proper skill to note this) and a permeating dampness. After a short walk south they are presented with two options: A deep volcanic vent forming a gulch winding south and southeast and sloping steadily downwards, or a wide western path sloping upwards. Depending on their final outcome with the Dark God beforehand, the GM should administer to the party as follows:

1. If they have accepted the “quest” in exchange for the obliteration of the dark druids, then they may proceed on either path presented. Proceeding south leads them to module #2 of the Dark Quest series, Claws in the Dark. GM should read that module for further explanations regarding the adventure and for other details not presented hereafter.

2. If they decided to take their chances by not accepting the quest, the Dark God destroys the dark druids anyway and curses the party with a special *contagion**, which will be fatal in 1d6 days (roll separately for each party member). The curse may be removed by an abjuration-type or dispelling-type spell cast at the 20th level of ability (or higher).

The entrance out is upon the path to the west. It is a long, twisting walk amongst cavernous climes to reach a cave mouth about 1,000 yards distant.

You note a grotto whose western portion is caved in rock and dirt. As you note your surroundings, you spy a piece of metal sticking out of the pile.

This room was once used for mining purposes. Nuggets of raw copper will be found amongst the debris. If the whole area is generally searched, read the following:

The walls are covered over with dust-encrusted roots. The chamber was obviously much larger than what it now presents. The metal piece appears to be part of a lantern.

If any of the PCs has a metalworking skill, read the following:

The lantern appears to be of superb craftsmanship and made of bronze, a metal abandoned for use in lantern-crafting well over 50 years ago.

There are no further items of worth here; and no more clues available about this room without proceeding to module #2, Claws in the Dark. The PCs must dig out the cave-in to escape. There is 30 yards of rubble before them. GMs must ascertain how long this would take. The blockage can be easily removed by a summoned earth elemental, or by powerful earth-moving magic.

Upon breaking through, read the following summary of what they see (but also note module #2, Claws in the Dark, for further details regarding the area beyond, as there are clues here which may aid the party in their quest):

You break out into fresh air! The area before you appears to be that of a wrecked village, long-abandoned and decayed by time. There is the fresh smell of water and the lapping sound of waves. You're on an island, a small eyot (in a bay or river or coastal area – GMs decide to suit their campaign). After a quick search, you find a canoe which is still serviceable and of excellent make (it is in fact of elvish make). You note directions and proceed towards the nearest settlement. Congratulations!

GMs must keep in mind the *contagion**, but overall the players have completed their mission. If they stopped N'Threxus' summoning, they have won the battle, as the Dark God then intervened to destroy his once faithful followers as would a scientist destroy an errant creation. As for the village, therein lie many clues for future adventures in this series, but the PCs should be concerned with the *contagion** and would have no time to investigate the village in total.

AFTERWORD

Dark Druids is module #1 of the Dark Quest series, a group of interrelated adventures set in the dark confines of the underground, where the players are trapped due to circumstances relating to completing their first mission.

A quick note about the design of these modules. The series is designed with a classic feel and purpose. First, as is the case with many of my designs, I feel that placing adventurers out of their element in ultra-fantastic settings is the truest, and boldest, form of adventure. This classic feel is not what one would consider “old school” adventuring, but quite the opposite. It is adventure in its highest form for these reasons: It strips the PCs of their tried and true methods, setting challenge levels on high; it necessitates rethinking what works, and so inspires exceptional role-playing; it keeps players on the edge of their seats not knowing what to expect; and it traps them in an environment which begs to be understood and conquered, lest the reverse ring true instead and they fall victim to it.

These are the fundamental underpinnings of the Dark Quest modules. They are rife with odd magic, creatures, non-common-place occurrences and challenges. They excite the imagination to a level where the lure of the game, plus the enchantment of being somewhere really out of the ordinary, loudly proclaim themselves over and over. They will bring shouts of joy and dismay from participants and equally the swift sounds of feet scrambling in retreat, as well as the answering sound of swords being unsheathed for a victorious charge into the fray. What they won't do is disappoint the newcomer or the old-timer alike. These are meant as pure, thought-provoking, gut-wrenching fantasies wherein anything can happen and often does!

Robert J. Kuntz
Waukesha, Wisconsin

APPENDIX A — CONTINUING THE DARK QUEST

PLAYING OUT THE QUEST: DARK DRUIDS AND BEYOND

Note that the consequences of completing their quest to destroy the dark druids have a down side for the adventurers: They are now trapped in the underground beneath their enemy's stronghold, and have had to agree to a quest to deliver an item to the Dark God who assisted them by destroying the cult. Much adventure lies ahead!

This series will challenge the best of your players, so be forewarned! There are no instant ways out and no instant recipes for success. Players will need to summon extra competence levels, reinvigorate their imaginations and take their licks as they push forward. Sound familiar, you say? Don't bet on it. Parts of this series challenged the best PCs in my campaign some 25 years ago and toasted my best players. When all is said and done, this series will introduce so many new monsters, traps, spells, feats, gods, races, champions of gods, insane political situations, obtuse traps and tricks, as well as challenging think-through situations that your players will be bargaining for more time, begging for mercy and at the same time wanting more. Be prepared for a wondrous ride into the lands of enchantment and pure fantasy! Back to the day when all of the many powers and weapons failed and all you were left to carry on with were your wits and imagination!

Reminder: The other modules in the series are not available, and to the best of the editor's knowledge there are no plans to release them. But what follows here and in Appendix B is a framework for building the followup scenarios yourself.

DARK QUEST SERIES CAPSULES

Part 1 — Dark Druids: Against the fanatic cult that believes that the destruction of humankind will save the world!

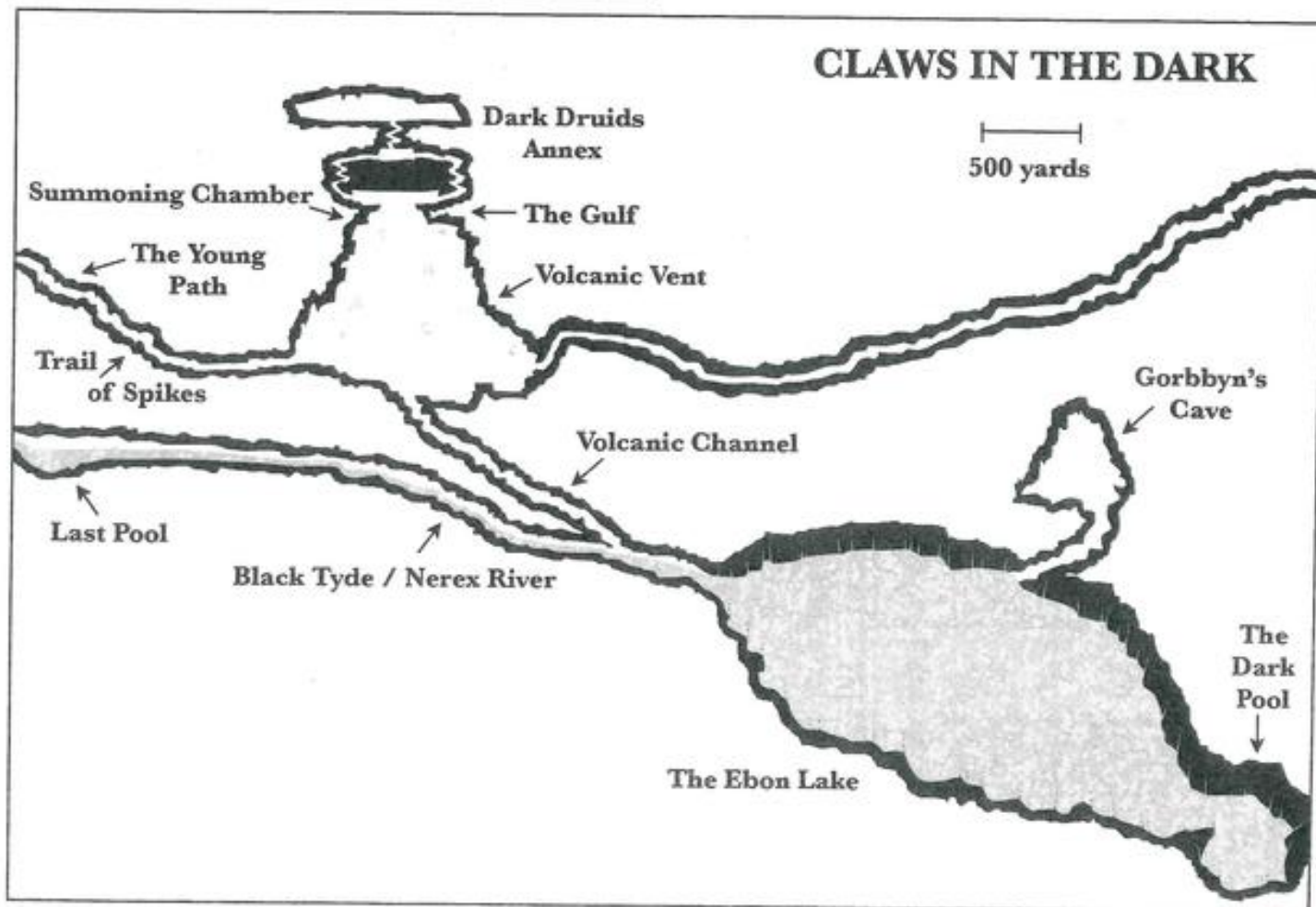
Part 2 — Claws in the Dark: Following the Dark God's instructions, the players must navigate the River Nerex and pass a magical gauntlet imposed by an ancient bestial race bent upon their destruction.

Part 3 — Black Heart: In seeking to deliver a token to the Dark God, the PCs must enter his prison tomb, wherein lies an ancient challenge and a doubtful ally. (This scenario includes a full description of The Joining ritual.)

Part 4 — Revenant Sea: In their continuing quest to escape from the wiles of the Dark God, the players seek passage upon the Revenant Sea, where terrors from the past await them.

Part 5 — Isle of Bronze: While seeking their final destination to reclaim their freedom from the Dark World in which they are trapped, the PCs arrive at the Isle of Bronze and come face to face with its strange inhabitants and a challenge which will test their abilities to the fullest.

Part 6 — Vale of the Titans: To complete their quest and free themselves of the Dark World in which they are trapped, the players must challenge the champions of the gods themselves while completing a quest which could unleash a deadly force upon the world.



CLAWS IN THE DARK (SCENARIO SUMMARY)

The following summarizes the 2nd part of the Dark Quest series. The included map, and its descriptions, are part and parcel of that adventure.

Dark Druids Annex

Where the Dark Druids adventure takes place.

The Gulf

Where the players must descend to escape the devastation of the druids. (Area 65 of Dark Druids.)

The Dark God's Antechamber

Where the players resist the Dark God's entreats or agree to them. (Area 71 of Dark Druids.)

Volcanic Vent

The dark druids temple/annex rests upon an extinct volcano.

Magma Basin

A solid foundation of magma exists here; running in this is treacherous as the magma has formed jagged and serrated edges and these obtrusions are likely to severely cut those who are not wary of them.

Trail of Spikes

An underground term, mostly used by the elders of the Rolven. In their howling-language it is pronounced: Eves-Spec. It denotes a time in the past where the trail was used by the tarrasque, and is the furthest distance brave members of the Rolven would follow it, wailing on its heels to let it know of their respect and fear for it. The trail narrows near the Young Path.

Young Path

In combination with the Trail of Spikes, this path is the one used by the players to exit the Dark Druids scenario. It is also referred to as the "Trail of Lesser Spikes" by those denizens of the deep who witnessed the tarrasque move upon it in its youth. The path narrows and the ceiling drops in height here, so the tarrasque, upon growing to medium stature, was not able to navigate it and thus turned back after climbing the Trail of Spikes. A cave-in (as described at the end of the Dark Druids scenario) terminates its steeply-rising, westward progression.

Volcanic Channel

A long, steeply-descending, mostly-smooth lava tube of varying dimensions, which at its terminus accesses the Nerex River. This tube contains many grottoes (not noted on the map) which house **bacchin** bats (of several poisonous varieties and all quite voracious) and the **alepf** (a near-blind species of gigantic worm), the latter which lair nearer to the Nerex.

Black Tyde / Nerex River

A river of black ichorousness which is partially fed by the Last Pool. Its torrent rushes downhill quickly to feed the Ebon Lake whereat the current becomes slower as it meanders, to later gather new strength from the Dark Pool. Crossing it is dangerous for the swiftness of its current, its iciness, and for its variable depths. The Rolven even avoid touching it, preferring to use their "leks" (rafts) to navigate upon it, even though they are capable swimmers. The Rolven believe that the Dark God created the river to drink from and that it must certainly have magical properties because of that fact.

Last Pool

A minor pool which feeds the Nerex. Once considered by the Rolven as a clean source of water. This pool is now a forgotten place of the past and is only visited by wandering creatures, such as giant reptiles and large water snakes. A rare dark green herb, the **suldry**, grows here. The pungent and enticing aroma given off by its clusters of small bulbs is much sought after by perfumists for use in their various concoctions. However, this aroma also attracts water snakes of different varieties, including the giant **conda**, though this fact is not currently known to those who traffic in the herb.

ONE OF THE ROLVEN



The Ebon Lake

An inky-black lake, fed by the Nerex whereat the Rolven have made their subterranean community. Though mostly shallow, the underwater currents are treacherous in the deeper parts, which are often sink holes forming whirlpools. The Rolven subsist here in crudely excavated caves near the waterside and use their rafts to navigate across the water.

The Rolven: The best description of a Rolven is that of a wererat, though that is where the descriptor ends. Rolven have a keener intelligence than the aforementioned race and their elders often wield magic, either in spell form or through artifacts (magic items). The Rolven will attack anyone trespassing into their realm; prisoners are taken to Gorbbyn's Cave for sacrifice to the Dark God.

Gorbbyn's Cave

A large cave complex bored over time by the subterranean waters, which have since subsided. Secluded therein are the elite of the Rolven—mage-priests known only in their language as the **Karchenek** (which equates in common tongue to the **Chitterers**). Their high-priest is Gorbbyn-Long-Tongue, He who Feeds on Hearts. There is a temple here dedicated to the Dark God whereat living sacrifices are made. These mage-priests are studied in blood magic and dark rites and are stronger when gathered en masse.

The Dark Pool

An exit point from the Claws in the Dark scenario. This gigantic whirlpool must be entered to continue the Dark God's Quest. Those who survive navigating it are emptied at area 1 of Part 3 of the Dark Quest Series, Black Heart.

APPENDIX B — THE DARK GOD (ARTICLE)

Publisher Note: This article was originally published in September 2003 via Rob Kuntz's ERKME #4 (the fourth in a series of periodic emailings), and on the Canonfire! website (www.canonfire.com) — which describes itself as containing, "news, articles, and archive material focusing primarily on the World of Greyhawk Fantasy Setting"). It is presented here essentially unchanged, though page references have been updated to match this printing of Dark Druids. As of this module's printing, the referenced work "The Dark God Arises" is still unpublished.

The Dark God: Historical Content, Developer Commentary, and an Ode to the Dark God

by Robert J. Kuntz

When "WG4 The Forgotten Temple of Tharizdum" was published by my good friend Gary Gygax he thanked me in the credits for inspiration regarding some of that module's conceptual content. To clarify that point, and to expound upon it, is the intent of this article, specifically written with all of Canonfire's readers in mind.

In 1982 I created a fictional, evil subterranean god, an alien being of dimensional bent, not of the world, who was captured by the gods soon after his arrival upon it. His titles were many: Dark One, Lord of Nightmares, Eldest from the Outer Void, and others. His name, as conceived then, was simply Tharzdu'un (Tharz-du-Un).

He existed as a prisoner from the outset, gaining his worshippers, his servants and his other followers through coercive dreams, which the gods then were not capable of stopping. Over time his adherents formed about his prison tomb deep beneath the earth where "The Lord of Magic had shackled him, using all of the known substances of the World, all of its known magics, to create the fetters which held him as an eternal prisoner, a sleeping and forgotten god."¹

With the advent of Tharizdum in WG4, I ceased expanding upon my Dark God. His initial mythical purpose had been served and moreover propagated by Gary's own imagination, and with sound steps carried forward into the published light of day, so to speak.

With the publication of my Dark Druids module (Troll Lord Games, 2002) I revisited the Myth of the Dark God, outlining his extended history as carried forward from where I left off. It is in no large way different from what Gary saw and expanded on in 1984, something I felt then was a great treatment of the matter by himself.

What I offer hereafter is my point of view on the Dark God, his forming history and future activities within the ever-changing milieu which has nurtured him. It is not a retrospective, merely a continuing effort to expand upon this interesting topic which, when all is said and done, was started by my humble self.

The Advent of the Tarrasque as Part of the Myth Cycle

Reference: Dark Druids area 12.

*"Past the Twain in Depths Unplumbed
Lies in sleep an evil one.*

*Wherefrom roams his spiked pet,
As often as his dreams do let,
Past yapping, snarling things which crawl,
And at its heels do wail.*

*That is where the spike did ring,
Did at last prevail.
When plucked so mightily from its hind,
A gift, a bane, his hand to mine..."*

The tarrasque is seen here, as insinuated by the poem, as a servant of the Dark God. It is his "pet" which defers to him and which is much like his master. For it sleeps, much of it is unconquerable, it resists magic (a key to its continued association with the Dark God, as I shall expand upon), it is subterranean, feared, and considered by many to be the worst possible threat to civilization due to it rampaging the upper world before returning to its subterranean slumber.

The tarrasque's reasons for doing what it does, the destruction it causes, are here-to-fore unknown. They are as mysterious as the Dark God and his own dreams. Does the Dark God instigate this creature? For surely it seems a nightmare become reality in such instances where it is between hibernations. In the above poem fragment, 3rd and 4th lines, that question is answered for the positive:

*"Wherefrom roams his spiked pet,
As often as his dreams do let..."*

So the tarrasque is seen as a physical extension of the Dark God. A subterranean pet and servant which is linked with this god and his purpose, but which can only be awakened from its own deep slumber by a stronger willed being such as his Master.

The Tarrasque in Relation to Tharzdu'un's Imprisonment

In a prefatory/back matter note to the upcoming "The Dark God Arises" I expound on Tharzdu'un's imprisonment:

"Through the barrier he came. And he beheld a world of light as something he would absorb. Being to nothingness is what he begot, for he was the Void.

Quailing, the gods did rally to each other, even as the Underworld bowed to him. And the World and everything in it spoke rejection; and the Lord of Magic heard. He took a little from each which had spoken so as to fashion a mighty spell therefrom to defeat the Lord of the Void. But the spiked one would not be swayed to join in this union against the darkness. Thus one part always remained: a key to the lock, a danger in the darkness."

In deciding upon the continuation of the course of a myth it is good to ground oneself at its beginning. The tarrasque's own association with Tharzdu'un is seen as immediate. It naturally gravitated to him even as the course of events surrounding the Dark God's imprisonment were taking shape. Then too it was young, and its carapace resilient, and from this the Dark God fashioned the "key" to his future lock, for the tarrasque had not lent part of itself to form the shackles of his prison, which the Dark God knew was near at hand.

*"That is where the spike did ring,
Did at last prevail.
When plucked so mightily from its hind,
A gift, a bane, his hand to mine..."*

And this is where the future hierophant of the dark druids, then a elven man of no consequence, and in fact one of the first of human-kind to be summoned upon the Dark God's arrival, takes shape.² He is the forerunner of a sect which will go wildly astray while attempting to interpret and serve its unknown master, as detailed in the last line: "A gift, a bane, his hand to mine..."

He is commanded to take the Tarrasque Spike, but for what reasons, these are left a mystery. That the god needn't inform him of the spike's purpose is all too correct. This is the key to Tharzdu'un's freedom which in a desperate moment he gives into the keeping of a servant. For all intents and purposes it is a symbol of their new-born relationship and likewise a relic of a future sect which will eventually grow nearer to the Master, and that is all. But in area 10 of Dark Druids it is noted that "Those wielding this spike will have its *other powers and functions revealed to them by the Dark God at "appropriate" times.*" [Emphasis mine.] And this is reiterated in the artifact's description in Appendix D: "It has both innate powers and those imparted by the Dark God for specific reasons and/or at specific times."

The following fragment from "Ode to the Dark God"³ also hints at the tarrasque's intimate tie with the Dark God, which he manipulates to break his bonds.⁴ This situation is fully explored in the "Dark Quest"⁵ series of adventures.

*"Let it be known that,
No Chains,
No Element,
No Magic,
No Strength,
Holds its sinews,
From its appointed destiny.*

*When the Dark Time comes,
It shall move,
Towards and for the Void,
Bellowing for its Master.*

*Shackles shall fly;
And sparks shall sunder,
That which the Lord of Magic,
Once made unyielding..."*

Mahzrat is the author of the "Ode," but only many hundred years later. This clues us in on what has become of the relationship as the details are made known to him (by association and dream sendings). Mahzrat knows at this point his master's will and plans and he openly writes about them.

¹ From my previous, equally ancient, notes — RJK.

² Mahzrat was the name given to him by the Dark God. In elven his name means "Maze-rat." This also alludes, in total, to what will become of a nearby elven colony which over time is summoned and physically changed by the Dark God's dreams. This is touched upon briefly in two lines of the poem:

*Past yapping, snarling things which crawl,
And at its heels do wail.*

The former elven colony, now deserted, is also noted at the end of Dark Quest Part 1, "Dark Druids"; and the whole history of this mysterious event is fully detailed in Part 2, "Claws in the Dark."

³ The complete ode appears in the unpublished work, "The Dark God Arises!"

⁴ As the only living thing to defy the Lord of Magic, it is by comparison noteworthy that the tarrasque is also a highly magical being. The tarrasque's magic resistant powers, as well as its newly defined position, are key to it serving as the Dark God's instrument. Thus, "a key to the lock, a danger in the darkness," as previously noted. Through its siding with Tharzdu'un against the gods does its legend obtain true mythical proportions.

⁵ Note Appendix A for capsule descriptions of each part of the series.

The Dark God Arises

The latter part of the ode expands upon Tharzdu'un being freed and what this means.

*"...Darkness will fall,
Upon the awakening brood.
And the Black Heart will come forth,
And his dreams will be real again.*

*Nightmares will walk sleepless.
The Darkness will chatter,
Evil beyond recognition.
Necromancers will cower.
Dread priests will falter;
Knives to their own breasts,
Prostrating their husks to his will.*

*A deeper shade of Night,
Will obscure The Sun God's ray.
All will cry and flee,
Unrelenting to the Void,
To bow to and kiss,
Darkness eternal.*

*None will escape,
His withering grasp.
Even Fairy shall recoil,
Its King, his dreams, smitten.*

*Darkness will merge with Darkness.
The sun shall squint, blinded.
The beckoning moons will disappear,
Leaving all of their ken,
Wrapped in a dark shawl,
Howling without purpose. ..."*

A World Of Darkness

The World thereafter becomes an apocalyptic battleground; and the gods are either victorious in defeating Tharzdu'un or are not. The negative consequences of not doing so cast an eternal darkness upon the earth, and all is changed. Good elements fractionalize into power struggles as the chaos takes hold, neutrals turn upon themselves and others, and evil passes or is absorbed for the Dark God's purpose.

Tharzdu'un is an alien god who views humans and their kind as mere puppets and tools, instruments of his will and rulership. There is no such thing as "followers" in his view—every being is a slave to his purpose or is just as easily discarded as inconsequential to his scheme of things. The former actions of the once all-powerful gods are seen, in retrospect, as forgiving by comparison.

The last desperate attempt to free the World from its fall into darkness and despair is related in the adventure, "The Darkest Day," a prelude to the "The Dark God Arises," where the surviving Gods (of all alignments) via their champions actually work together to dethrone Tharzdu'un, the "Dread Usurper."

Afterword

I will continue crafting more material on the Dark God, his myth, and will hopefully finish designing the related adventures soon enough so as not to leave those interested waiting for too long a period. His is a myth which has been in hiding for too long; and one which has strong roots in the epics of fantasy gaming. The Dark God's mysteries beckon to be uncovered, as well as rediscovered, to the death of us all!

Robert J. Kuntz
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

APPENDIX C — CHANGES IN THIS VERSION OF DARK DRUIDS

This version of Dark Druids contains a number of editorial changes, compared to its direct predecessor — the 2006 Creations Unlimited (“CU”) pdf version. Most of those changes are just minor editing tweaks, or conversions to AD&D stats. But a few changes are more significant, and are listed here for reference.

Eliminated/Changed Ability Checks: Some (but not all) ability “checks” from the CU version were converted to be more congruent with AD&D mechanics, especially where the check appeared to be a translation of a skill check in the d20 version. Area 6’s torture trees previously used a strength check for escaping. Area 45’s door previously used a strength check for opening (now just a “roll,” which could be an open doors roll, or similar). Area 47 previously also required an intelligence check to detect the inert elemental magic. Area 52 previously used an intelligence check (now a 3-in-6 roll). The Misbegotten creature description replaces many skill bonuses with increased sensing fidelity/range/etc., or non-mechanical descriptives. N’Threxus’ Misbegotten Aura power replaces the control check with a morale check. The *dark heart* spell description removes the word “check,” but leaves the underlying mechanic the same.

NPC Spell Selections: Whereas the CU version made only a suggestion for some of the spells each NPC spell caster memorized, this version gives a full complement of spells to each relevant NPC. The selections adhere to the recommendations made in the CU version.

Re-organized Keyed Areas: For easier usability during play, this version combines, breaks apart, and/or re-orders some keyed areas. Most notably, various door/portal exterior details are now in separately keyed areas from the corresponding room’s contents, and the descriptions for areas on level #3 are presented in an order that flows from the entrance tunnels toward the gulf. (The latter change improves reading flow into the Ending the Adventure section and Appendix A.)

Area 5: This version no longer contains information alluding to the druid possibly still being present when the PCs approach the area. The CU version seemed to be of two minds on this detail, at once suggesting that the druid might still be there for 1d6 hours (and fleeing when he easily sees the PCs’ approach), while also being clear that the druid’s fate has already been sealed at areas 20-22. You could certainly have a druid present in this area, but you’ll need to reconcile that with details in a number of different keyed areas. Certainly the druid would be alerted by the Thresher Demon’s warnings at area 5, possibly fleeing to warn his allies at area 6. If the PCs act fast enough, you would need to remove his dead body from area 21, and the teleportation rune at area 6 would still be functional.

Area 17: The summonable creature in the CU version was a “star salamander,” which was basically just the grick from the d20 version, with its name changed and feats removed. Because the star salamander wasn’t given a full description, and because it originates from the d20 System, it was replaced in this version with an appropriately-themed AD&D monster (the tentamort).

Area 26 / *Urn of Elemental Darkness*: The CU version specified a +10 bonus for using an urn ring while trying to maintain the urn on the plane, which didn’t match the +5 urn ring bonus in the tandem power usage rules. You could switch to +10 for either normal urn maintenance or tandem power usage, but a bonus that large might make it too easy to control the urn.

Area 32: Fenelorth’s assumption that there are probably more *dark horns* present was, in the CU version, accompanied with a pointer to area 26 for another *dark horn*. Unfortunately area 26’s description in the CU version did not mention a *dark horn* at all. You could certainly add a *dark horn* there if you wish.

Areas 55, 68, 69: Instead of *oil of impact*, the combatants in these keyed areas in the CU version each had a new magic item called an *elixir of profane might* (see sidebar). This was switched to a more standard AD&D magic item in order to save space in those keyed area descriptions, and also because the *elixir* felt kind of like a (very loose) translation of the d20 System-specific magic item used the d20 version’s equivalent keyed areas.

Elixir of Profane Might – Quaffing this potion grants the imbiber (if essentially evil in ethical outlook or alignment) a +4 bonus to attack and damage rolls for 2d4 rounds.

Areas 66-69: This version increases the stated size of the Ritual Platform areas to better match the maps in this and earlier versions. You might choose to reduce the platforms’ size to the 40’ x 20’ dimensions mentioned in prior versions.

Appendix D – Tarrasque Spike description: In the CU version, the magic reflecting power was ad-hoc: Magic immunity 45% for reflection; 20% reflected back at the caster. This version changes it to work like a *ring of spell turning*, which seems to be closer to the original intent (based on wording from the first d20 version of the module).

Appendix E – Misbegotten description: In the CU version, each sort of creature (amphibian, avian, mammal) had its own list of limb/feature categories and corresponding effect descriptions. In order to save space, this version combines some of those categories together where they had obviously similar details (e.g., Teeth / Tusks / Horns / Beak / Bill).

Appendix F – Umber Eye Sect description: The CU version had the *profanation* spell listed among those available to Umber Eye druids. Unfortunately the spell description itself made it clear that it was only for Black Hat druids, so this version does not grant *profanation* to Umber Eyes. But you could certainly make it available to Umber Eye druids too, if you wish.

Appendix G – Frighten Animals description: The CU version did not include a description of this spell, so one was added to this version.

APPENDIX D — NEW MAGIC ITEMS

TARRASQUE SPIKE (MAJOR ARTIFACT)



This appears to be a 4' long by roughly 1' wide spike, golden-yellow in color and apparently taken from some gigantic creature. The Dark God claims the tarrasque as his own "pet" and servant, having an intimate relationship with it dating back to an ancient time before the deity was imprisoned (note further details about this relationship in upcoming modules of the Dark Quest series).

This artifact has a rich history. It was originally given as a gift by the Dark God to Mahzrat, the long dead founder and hierophant of the dark druidic cult. It has both innate powers and those imparted by the Dark God for specific reasons and/or at specific times. It is considered a relic of the aforementioned cult, and its loss definitely brings many quests, both suicidal and otherwise, in attempts by its members to reclaim it.

Though plucked from the tarrasque's carapace many years ago, the spike still retains some of the reflective powers it normally had, though in weakened form; it acts as a *ring of spell turning* that operates on all magic (i.e., not just spells). The Dark God has imparted the following additional special qualities upon the spike:

1. Upon death, the current wielder's spirit is held captive in the spike (like a *mirror of life trapping*) for as long as the spike remains in existence. Upon its destruction, the captive spirits find their separate ways to their heavenly/spiritual resting places. While so entrapped, the spirits can be summoned by the spike wielder to provide answers about which they have some degree of knowledge. This summoning may be done once per week, for a total of 1d4+1 answers. The spirits are obligated to speak, but 90% of the time their answers will be in cryptic or riddle form. Otherwise they answer questions in readily understandable sentences. However, for each question asked, there is an accumulative 20% chance that the spike becomes so heavy in the wielder's hands that it is dropped, which in turn ends the current question and answer session. This is a supernatural heaviness which cannot be defeated by normal or magical means.
2. It completely reflects light-based attacks (not fire) 50% of the time; and also reflects all light, stunning those who look upon it (save vs. magic to avoid). Count anyone attacking the wielder as looking upon him or her long enough to be affected, unless they take special precautions. The dazing effects are ever present as long as there is light to reflect; if there is no light present, this power does not function. A *darkness* (or similar spell) negates the light reflection abilities of the spike for as long as the spike wielder remains within the *darkness*. Note that the previous wielders of the spike have always sought to cover it in some manner, and then unveil it at an opportune moment. This avoids the constant need by friendly beings to avoid looking upon it.
3. The spike naturally homes in on the actual tarrasque and the Dark God, providing a general feeling of each being's locale. This imparts a raw direction and some indication of distance, plus or minus 10-30% in variance. It glows a brilliant golden hue when within 100 yards of either being.

This item is unique and cannot be duplicated. Selling it is almost impossible, as the spike radiates an antipathy in such situations, making buyers negative to the idea.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS IN DARK DRUIDS

Black Flameburst Sword +1 — page 8.

Bronze Trolls — page 8.

Claw of N'Threxus (Major Artifact) — page 29.

Dark Horn — see areas 3 and 5.

Elixir of Profane Might — page 40.

Hood of Mental Anguish — page 8.

Ivory Moth — page 31.

Rite of Passage — page 24.

Ring of Blending — page 33.

Short Sword of Scathing — page 9.

Staff of Summonings and Sendings — page 27.

Stone of Elemental Entrenchment — page 30.

Tarrasque Spike (Major Artifact) — this page.

Tentacle Longsword +2 — page 20.

Torture Trees — page 8.

Urn of Elemental Darkness (Major Artifact) — pages 17-19.

APPENDIX E — NEW MONSTERS

BLACK CIRCLE DEMON

FREQUENCY: Rare
NO. APPEARING: 1
ARMOR CLASS: -2
MOVE: 0"
HIT DICE: 10
% IN LAIR: n/a
TREASURE TYPE: Nil
NO. OF ATTACKS: 0
DAMAGE/ATTACK: Nil
SPECIAL ATTACKS: Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES: See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 30%
INTELLIGENCE: Exceptional
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic evil
SIZE: L (See below)
PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil
ATTACK/DEFENSE MODES: Nil
LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: VII/2000+14/hp

A black circle demon is a rare creature summoned by those magicians and clerics who are in league with dark, evil forces. It can assume various shapes depending upon its environment, but always manifests as wood, appearing to be a mass of tightly woven, thick black roots. These demons can reshape their forms and size instantly to fit their needs; but as it is a defensive demon who allies itself with, and is solely dependent upon, their summoner for it to achieve and maintain any reality on the Prime Material Plane, it is more often ordered into a shape by the being who controls it.

Black circle demons are highly intelligent, though they do not communicate so much as they "receive." They are at the beck and call of their ritual masters, giving freely of their powers until these are exhausted or until the demon is slain or ordered hence. These demons are peculiar to their class as they are strictly defensive, immobile and non-combatant. The summoner and those who partake of the "sacrificial deed" can use this demon's defensive powers and abilities so long as they remain within its circle. Overall, they are valuable but silent allies.

The demon usually shapes itself into a 30' radius, 10' high circle, similar in form to a circular barricade or fort. The demon may open its roots at will, reshaping itself to allow ingress/egress, in essence creating doors, small tunnels, windows and the like; these roots can as quickly close to trap unwary opponents within its circle. It can also

cause, at will, a thick ceiling of roots and thorns to cover its upper extremities, blocking anyone attempting to enter or exit the circle that way. The canopy takes a full minute to grow out from its separate coigns and join together.

Summoning

These creatures are summoned by the usual spell means, although the existence of black circle demons is not known outside of the dark druid sects and others who dabble in demonry of the highest sort. A black circle demon will remain on the Prime Material Plane indefinitely as long as someone has partaken of the bloodletting ritual and is still present within the circle. Failing either of these two circumstances, whole or in part, automatically dismisses the demon; it departs without warning and must then be re-summoned.

Sacrificial Deed / Bloodletting Ritual

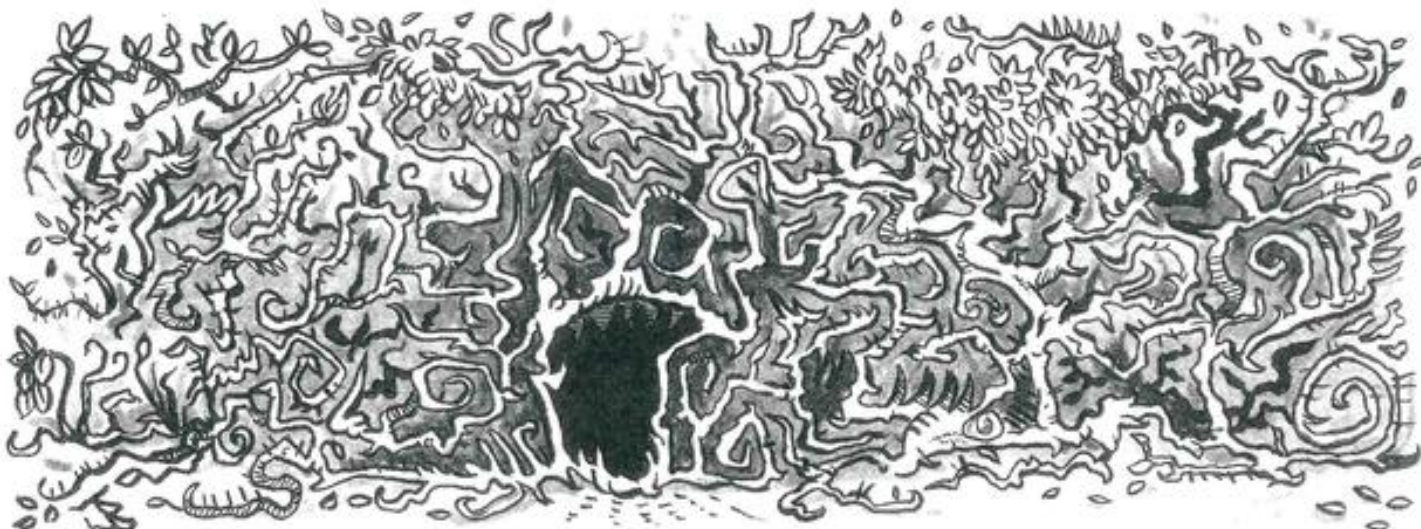
The demon exposes two stumps within the circular barricade, which protrude from the ground, and are attached by hidden roots to its main body. The ritual requires that blood be let upon these stumps, once per day, by all those who wish to benefit from its protective powers. Those shedding blood and remaining within the circle are benefited; those moving outside the circle (including flying more than 10' above it) lose benefits until returning to the circle. The demon can benefit no more than six allies at a time, even if a greater number of beings partake of the bloodletting ritual.

Bestowed Benefits

The following benefits accrue to those protected by the demon:

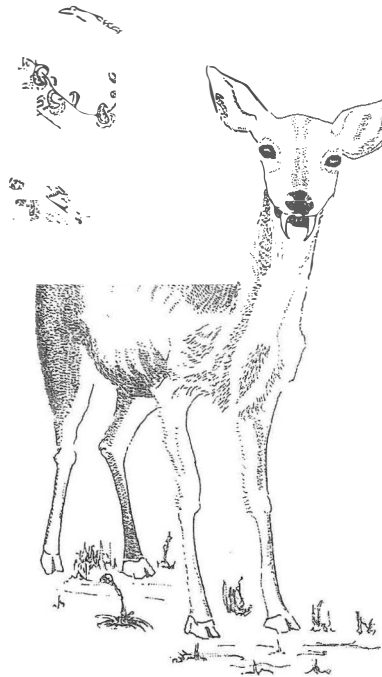
- The resistances common to all demons: ½ damage from cold, electrical, fire, and gas attacks.
- 15% magic resistance.
- Immunity to spells and powers to which the demon itself is immune.
- Hit point regeneration, as described below.

A black circle demon regenerates the hp of its protected allies, up to a total, cumulative maximum of 300% the demon's normal hp score, per day. Once these regenerative hp have been expended, this benefit ceases until 24 hours have passed. Regeneration takes place at a continuous pace for those allies who are currently damaged, and cannot otherwise be specified by the demon. The range of hp that can be regenerated at a single time is limited only by the amount of regeneration capacity that the demon has remaining. This benefit automatically ceases if the demon is slain, controlled, or is banished from the current plane, or (of course) if the ally steps outside of the protected circle.



MISBEGOTTEN

FREQUENCY: 1/a
 NO. APPEARING: *
 ARMOR CLASS: *
 MOVE: *
 HIT DICE: *
 % IN LAIR: Per original creature
 TREASURE TYPE: Per original creature
 NO. OF ATTACKS: *
 DAMAGE/ATTACK: *
 SPECIAL ATTACKS: *
 SPECIAL DEFENSES: Fearless, and see below
 MAGIC RESISTANCE: *
 INTELLIGENCE: Per original creature
 ALIGNMENT: Chaotic evil
 SIZE: Per original creature
 PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil
 ATTACK/DEFENSE MODES: Nil
 LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: *



* these statistics are the same as a normal version of the animal/plant, except as modified by its mutations.

A misbegotten creature is any otherwise-normal animal or plant that has been mutated by the Create Misbegotten ritual (see Appendix F). Humans, demi-humans, humanoids, planar creatures and other sorts of monsters cannot become misbegotten.

Each misbegotten creature appears with at least one notable mutation as listed in the groupings hereafter. Since a creature mutates steadily as it grows older, GMs must assess the possibilities of multiple mutations under those circumstances. The variations are endless, given the subject, but in most cases should not exceed 2 or 3 different mutations.

Note: What follows is a general list of animal-specific possibilities to choose from. But the lists are by no means exhaustive; GMs are encouraged to add to, subtract from, and experiment with what is presented to find their own unique mixes.

Amphibian (d6 / choose)	Avian (d10 / choose)	Mammal (d10 / choose)
1. Eyes	1. Eyes	1. Eyes
2. Fins	2. Skin/Feathers	2. Skin/Fur
3. Tail	3. Wings	3. Legs/Arms
4. Skin/Scales	4. Ears	4. Ears
5. Teeth	5. Claws/Talons	5. Claws
6. Body	6. Beak/Bill (Teeth)	6. Teeth
	7. Tail	7. Tail
	8. Legs	8. Feet/Paws
	9. Body	9. Tusks/Horns (Teeth)
	10. reroll	10. Body

Body: Smaller (-20% hp); larger (+10% hp); physical stamina (+10/+20 hp for medium/large); physical weakness (reduced speed, -2 hp per HD for medium/large); extra body part (GMs must assess, 75% chance of being useless, dangling, thus interfering with other abilities); missing body part (again, GMs must assess, making adjustments where necessary, but note that the head can never be missing and that some missing parts would automatically cripple a creature [i.e., a tail for a fish]).

Claws / Talons: Hardened (+1 damage); softer (-1 damage); curved/elongated (chance to restrain or grapple the target, or extra rake damage); iron-like (+2/+4 damage for medium/large creatures); extra digits (+1/+2/+3 damage for small/medium/large); extra skin (+1 bonus to AC); none (damage is halved or is non-lethal).

Ears: Keen-hearing/larger (reduced chance to be surprised, longer hearing range); acute hearing (cannot be surprised if sound is a factor); inset/curbed (increased chance to be surprised); sound sensitive (-2 on saves vs. sonic attacks, avoids large amounts of noise, per GM's option); sound immunity (reduced/no damage from sonic attacks); deaf (substantially increased chance to be surprised, per GM's option).

Eyes: Bulbous (all-around sight, sighting range increased 50%, reduced chance to be surprised); blind-sight (no penalties in darkness); filmy (sight range cut 50%, immune to light intensive blinding attacks); enlarged (sight range increased 50%); gains infravision (if already present increase the range by 50%); blind (helpless unless it can attack/sense by scent, magical means, etc.); light sensitive (-1 on "to hit" rolls); double vision (-2 on "to hit" rolls); keen-sight (sighting range/quality increased 50%, reduced chance to be surprised).

Feet / Paws: Unique splay form (+3" speed); larger (resulting clumsiness retards ground speed by -3"); smaller (requires longer rest periods, -1 on "to hit" rolls); resistant padding (not affected by normal inclement weather/climates, may move through harsh terrain at normal speed)

Fins: Enlarged (+ 20% swim speed); poisonous (touching the fins, or successful attack with same, produces a weak contact poison, save at +4, or suffer -3 to strength); shrunken (-20% swim speed); hardened (+2 damage).

Legs / Arms: Stronger musculature (+10% ground speed, +1/+2 damage for medium/large); longer (+10% ground speed, possible increased attack range); shorter (-10% ground speed); larger (+1/+2/+3 damage for small/medium/large, -3" ground speed); smaller (-3" ground speed).

Skin / Fur / Scales / Feathers: Softer/pliant (-2 penalty to AC); harder/denser (+2 bonus to AC); spiny growth/lobes (immune to blunt weapons); metallic hardness (negates strength bonuses of attacker; 10% chance of non-magical weapons breaking when they strike); puncture resistant (½ damage from piercing weapons); preternatural (immune/resistant to an element, energy, or similar type of effect, at GM's option); mottled (improved chance to surprise); gaudy coloration (reduced chance to surprise); molting increase (-3" fly speed, reduced maneuverability category [i.e., class A becomes class B, class B becomes class C, etc.]); profuse (-1 on "to hit" rolls, but +1 bonus to AC).

Tail: Enlarged (+20-50% swim speed, or +10% fly speed); prehensile (chance to restrain or grapple the target); shrunken (-10-30% swim speed, or -10% fly speed); extra serrations (+3 damage); longer (improved fly maneuverability category, or increased range of attack); shorter (reduced fly maneuverability category); variable protuberances (spines, spikes, nails, or sharp lobes for tail attack, 1d8/2d8 damage for medium/large); heavy (causes imbalance, slower, reduced maneuverability).

Teeth / Tusks / Horns / Beak / Bill: Brittle (-2 damage); razor sharp (+2/+4 damage for medium/large creatures); elongated/curved (-1 on "to hit" rolls, but +1 damage); double the number of teeth (+50% damage); larger (+20% damage); smaller (-10% damage); longer (increased attack range by 10-50%); serrated (+50% damage); none (cannot use relevant attack); less (-1/-2 damage for medium/large); excess (+1/+2 damage for medium/large, or +50% for tusks/horns); metallic hardness (+4/+8 tusk or horn damage for medium/large).

Wings: Larger (+10% fly speed); smaller (-10% fly speed); clawed (additional rake attacks for 1d3 [small creatures], 1d6 [medium], or 1d10 [large] damage); stronger (+50% fly speed, improved maneuverability category).

THRESHER DEMON

FREQUENCY: Rare
NO. APPEARING: 1
ARMOR CLASS: 0
MOVE: 0" or roots at 12"
HIT DICE: 20
% IN LAIR: n/a
TREASURE TYPE: Nil
NO. OF ATTACKS: 4
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 3d6 or grab
SPECIAL ATTACKS: See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES: See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 75%
INTELLIGENCE: High
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic evil
SIZE: L
PSIONIC ABILITY: Nil
ATTACK/DEFENSE MODES: Nil
LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: IX/8600 + 30/hp

These demons appear as a mass of roots and limbs thrusting forth from a central pod roughly 5' in diameter. They are only summoned to guard a specific area and will not move out of it once so positioned. They may stay on the Prime Material Plane for as many days as the summoner's charisma score and then they depart.

Thresher demons move their limbs and roots at run speeds to intercept intruders; their central pod remains buried up to 60' below the surface and is stationary. Thresher demons are very territorial and will attack anything, including other demons, which enter their domain. Once its true nature is discovered, this tactic can be employed to distract the demon, thus allowing safe passage for others. Only the one who summoned them can enter its territory without fear of being attacked.

These demons are common to both dark druidic sects, but are very rare outside of these. They are commonly summoned to guard or watch a specific area as they are immobile.

Thresher demons attack with their many limbs and roots, which appear out of the ground. Their initial attacks are aimed at grabbing hold of the target and pinning it so that the following round all attacks automatically hit. This demon prefers to destroy one intruder at a time.

The thresher demon's roots can sense living beings treading in its territory up to 200 yards away, but are only long enough to melee beings within 100'. If summoned for purposes of guarding an area, it will do so to the best of its ability. If it is knowingly outflanked or bypassed, it can raise its roots up to 50' in the air, sending an outré warning signal to those watching.

Since thresher demons remain buried as their roots attack, they are very difficult to kill. Commonly these creatures remain buried beneath 20-50' of dirt. Though the roots can be severed and thereby destroyed, these slowly re-grow and are capable of attacking once again 1d4 days later.

In addition to a demon's usual resistances to cold, electrical and gas attacks, thresher demons take only ½ damage from blunt and piercing weapons, as well as poison. But because of their form, thresher demons are more susceptible to fire, and do not receive a demon's usual fire resistance; they take normal damage from such attacks (instead of ½ damage).



N'THREXUS, DEMON LORD OF PESTILENCE

FREQUENCY: Unique
NO. APPEARING: 1
ARMOR CLASS: -8
MOVE: 12"
HIT DICE: 21 (95 hp)
% IN LAIR: n/a
TREASURE TYPE: Special
NO. OF ATTACKS: 3 or 2, and see below
DAMAGE/ATTACK: 3d4/3d4/2d12 or 2d10/2d10
SPECIAL ATTACKS: See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES: See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE: 60%
INTELLIGENCE: Genius+
ALIGNMENT: Chaotic evil
SIZE: L (12' tall)
PSIONIC ABILITY: 230
ATTACK/DEFENSE MODES: All/all
LEVEL/X.P. VALUE: X/48,000 (for material form)

Though this Demon Lord can alter its shape and form to appear as anything it wishes, it will 85% of the time appear as one of the following:

- (80% chance) A misbegotten, elk-headed giant with a rotting and disease-ridden body, that attacks with two hooves and a gore (antlers).
- (20% chance) A diseased mass of flesh, barely recognizable as bipedal, that batters with its club-like arms.

If it appears as something other than the two listed forms, GMs must decide what it presents itself as.

N'Threxus has the usual demon defenses, the spell-like powers typical for a major Demon Lord (*darkness*, *telekinesis*, etc., usable at the 18th-level of ability), and the following unique abilities:

Misbegotten Aura: A permanent aura which surrounds this being causes all animal forms to make saves vs. poison -2 to the roll or become Misbegotten (see that new monster description herein) under control of the demon. This affects is a 20' radius about N'Threxus when on the mortal realm, and double that when in its own realm. Animals making their saves will sense the impending doom and will automatically flee from *fear* for 2-8 rounds. In cases where the animal is under control of a character, check morale at -30% to keep control. Paladins' mounts suffer only a -0% to -15% on the morale check, depending on level of the paladin (low, medium, high, very high). GMs may decide to include in this category other creatures so trained to confront and fight the demonic. Note that good druidic animals never flee as long as the druid controlling or befriending them is within sight; however, other magically summoned, or trained, animals not meeting this criteria will flee.

Disease Touch: When N'Threxus hits with a melee attack, the target must save vs. poison or contract a rotting disease. The disease manifests as -10% hp (calculated based on full hp) per round thereafter until cured. Upon reaching half hp, those so stricken also lose 1 point of constitution per round thereafter and are stricken with a debilitating curse of confusion wherein they either wander aimlessly at half speed or sit in confounded thought, actionless. Powers or items which provide cures for disease must match N'Threxus' magic ability (18th level) in order to be effective; otherwise they provide no succor for the afflicted.

Summon Misbegotten: Once per day the demon may summon up to 20 Misbegotten animals of 4-6 HD, or 50 Misbegotten of 1-3 HD. The demon may select one type to summon at any one time, so all those occurring during any one particular summons are of the same type.

Summon Vrocks: N'Threxus may summon a troop of 20 Type I demons (vrocks) daily, which have the following additional powers:

CREATE MINOR CONFUSION: When flying above a target, within sight, but at no greater distance than 100 yards, groups of 4 or more of these beings cast a minor confusion effect, causing -2 "to hit" and a -10% chance to spell-casting success. This power subsists for as long as the above parameters exist, which, note, includes at least 4 vrocks present.

FLAME FEATHERS: One in ten vrocks will be empowered by their master with flame feathers which may be dispensed by the creature as an attack from a height of no greater than 20 yards. 2d4 feathers fall upon targets as missiles (resolve each feather as an attack by a 7 HD monster), with a damage of 2d4 per hit. The feathers regenerate automatically, so an infinite number of attacks of this type are possible, given enough time. These special vrocks are noted as having a dullish, gold hue to their feathers.

SCREECH OF DEATH: The last remaining (living) vrock embodies a special magical curse from the troop (a troop representing the 20 summoned by N'Threxus in a daily period). Upon dying, this vrock has a 50% chance of initiating the curse; it screeches horribly, and the sound resonates fearfully in the ears of those beings within a 50 yard radius, causing minor confusion (see above) in all who fail saves vs. magic. Saving throws are penalized based on proximity to the vrock: -5 within 10 yards; -4 up to 20 yards; -3 up to 30 yards; and so on. The effect lasts until dispelled (18th-level effect). Further, forever after, affected creatures suffer a revulsion for fighting vrocks, which manifests as -1 "to hit" and damage against them, and -1 to saves against their attacks. There is no cure for this revulsion other than through the highest possible magical means, such as divine intervention or the like. Targets can only be negatively affected by this dying screech once; its effects are not accumulative subsequent times. Note that this special curse is not affected by *remove curse*; dispelling magics must be sought instead, as noted.

Legends and History

It is legended that to kill N'Threxus grants immunity to disease for 366 days, to those within a 20' radius of it upon its death. Other sages describe less savory results, such as a curse which adversely affects longevity and/or sanity. It is also legended that a single rib from its elk form will protect from Misbegotten creatures, hedging them from the carrier, and also protecting those in a limited area about him or her, though this only a legend...

The history of this Demon Lord is obscure. It is thought that it is a manifestation of another Demon Lord in guise, but this is only conjecture. Though little is known of it, sages can still tell that it aligns itself to oppose the Dark God and at the same time attempts to destroy civilization through its Umber Eye adherents. Upon the dissolution of that dark druid sect, and especially with the death of its leader, Hesmat, this Demon Lord fades into the murky background, perhaps to be seen later in an alternate form during another rise of insane evil.

N'Threxus is the demon lord created and used for this adventure, but feel free to use any demon lord from your own campaign. This lord should have the ability to cause diseases and plagues in a great geographical area, and for this summoning appears as one of the misbegotten (an elk-headed giant) with a rotting and disease-ridden body.

The PCs should not be able to defeat N'Threxus through means at their disposal, including a belated try at instigating the Dark God, if this has not occurred earlier. Ultimately his appearance spells doom for the adventurers in any case.



APPENDIX F — DARK DRUID VARIANT CLASS



The dark druids are a particularly evil and organized branch of druids bent on the destruction of civilized mankind, as it sees them as an unnatural chaotic elemental force that will eventually destroy all of life. With this philosophy comes an inherent opposition to all peoples whom ascribe to an “advancement philosophy” – those that use and abuse the wealth of the earth, plundering its resources and laying waste to its natural elements and life with no regard to outcomes.

To this list they add all other druids whom they see as compromising the issue instead of siding with them. They are viewed as the “traitors” who sit back and with time will sacrifice all those things they supposedly hold dear. This extreme point of view is chaotic to say the least, though perhaps contains some germ of truth, as druidic society worries about such matters though little really has been forwarded to project beyond the here and now. Most druids see human growth and its effect upon the environment as paltry, though they remain sensitive to such encroachments when these strike too near to their own personal heartlands.

However, the dark druids claim to know the end of all things and that this will manifest through human population explosion and unchecked and continuous migration phases that their now-disfranchised brethren will be unable to stop.

In seeking to destroy the “destroyers” the dark druids have called upon the dark forces of nature to do their bidding, as nature by itself has elemental forces which can be used for good or ill, in positive or negative ways.

Unfortunately many of them have been led astray from their true path and purpose, unknowingly or purposefully siding with all that is dark and unwholesome, with the final view that the “end justifies the means.” This has fractionalized the dark druids and has brought many to outright conflict, as the moderate elements see this as yet another alliance of lost purpose that will ultimately lead to the destruction of nature, although through more diabolical means.

Experience Required	Level	HD (d8)	Spells by Level						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0	1	1	1						
2,251	2	2	2						
4,501	3	3	2	1					
8,501	4	4	3	2					
14,001	5	5	4	2	1				
25,001	6	6	4	3	2				
40,001	7	7	4	4	2	1			
65,001	8	8	4	4	3	2			
100,001	9	9	4	4	4	2	1		
150,001	10	10	4	4	4	3	2		
225,001	11	11	4	4	4	4	2	1	
350,001	12	12	4	4	4	4	3	2	
850,001	13	13	4	4	4	4	4	2	1
1,750,001	14	14	4	4	4	4	4	3	2
3,000,001	15	15	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3,500,001	16†	15+1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4,000,001	17	15+2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
4,500,001	18	15+3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5,000,001	19	15+4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
5,500,001	20	15+5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
6,000,001	21	15+6	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
6,500,001	22	15+7	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
7,000,001	23‡	15+8	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

Dark druids gain 1 hp per level after the 15th.

† At 16th level and above, a dark druid gains 4 additional spell levels, plus 1 per level over 16 (which he can distribute as he sees fit) in addition to his normal complement of spells (4 per level).

‡ Maximum level.

Race: Only humans, elves, and half-elves can become dark druids. The vast majority of these characters are human.

Weapons and Armor Permitted: Same as druids, except that they can use any weapon, metal or otherwise. They prefer to wear no armor at all, including leather.

Alignment: Dark druids can be chaotic neutral (with evil tendencies) or any type of evil. PCs changing alignment outside of these boundaries cease being dark druids.

Religion: Dark druids worship dark and chaotic forces as well as destructive gods, demons, devils, and other unnatural and dangerous elemental forces. They see the good and neutral gods who support civilization and its component human(oid) parts as great compromisers and thus a threat to the world’s future existence.

Sect: Each dark druid is a member of one of two sects (Umber Eye or Black Hat), which affects their outlook, dress, available spells, and other abilities as described on the following pages.

Hierarchy: The dark druids, being for the most part evil and chaotic, have no true hierarchy, though high-level members of both sects work to consolidate their power and eliminate any rivals. Too, lower-level members of the Order will conspire to eliminate those above them and assume the reins of command.

Relationship with Other Classes: Dark druids only see ethical outlook (or alignment), and only then as predicated by an adherence to their extreme philosophy, not class, as a reason for association. There are no classes with similar views, though assassins are sometimes regarded as semi-adherents to their philosophy of “might makes right” and thus can be dealt with at arm’s length.

Spells: Dark druids cast spells in the same way as their druidical counterparts. Their spells originate from nature, demony, and devilish corners, depending on their sect; this allegiance determines, in part, their range of available spells. (See the lists of Allegiance Spells in the sect descriptions.) A dark druid may use any allegiance spell appropriate to his sect, as well as any druidic spell which is not superseded by his allegiance list. In other words, many of the dark druid allegiance spells are similar to already-existing druidical magics; in these cases, the dark druid should have access only to the allegiance spell and not the similar spell cast by normal druids. For example, the dark druids' knowledge of the *spoil fodder*® spell precludes their use of the *purify water* spell.

Bonus Spells: A dark druid gains one additional spell level (to be distributed as he sees fit) for each point of wisdom over 13. For example, a dark druid with a wisdom score of 18 would receive five additional spell levels, which he could then use to memorize one additional 5th-level spell, one 2nd- and one 3rd-level spell, or one 1st- and one 4th-level spell. All spells are memorized and cast in the normal druidical fashion.

Spell Failure (Optional): Because the dark druids' allegiance spells call upon malign powers that even they do not fully understand, spell failure is always a real possibility. Unless the spell description states otherwise (e.g., *arouse evil*®), there is a base 80% chance of success when a dark druid casts an allegiance spell. To this number is added the dark druid's level of ability and one point for each point of wisdom over 14. In no event can the chance of spell success exceed 99%. If a spell failure occurs, not only does the spell not go off as planned, but the caster loses 1-3 points of constitution and he must make a save vs. magic or the effect will be permanent. Otherwise, it will pass in 1d4 x 12 hours. As this is an optional rule for GMs to use, feel free to adjust or amend the chances and/or penalties as listed above to suit your own needs.

Affected Animals & Plants: Animals and plants befriended, conjured, or summoned by dark druids are always chaotic and hostile to mankind, always have at least 4 hp per HD, and are always fearless. Furthermore, all such creatures/plants have a chance of an additional power, based on the dark druid's sect, as described therein.

Bonus Languages: Dark druids forswear learning those languages exhibited by their counterparts. They can substitute any evil humanoid language available as a bonus language due to race. They also know the Druidic language which they proliferate without concern to followers, thus betraying past oaths of secrecy concerning this language. Dark druids use a form of the Druidic alphabet with some minor, cosmetic changes.



Resistance (1st level): A dark druid gains a +1 bonus per level (i.e., +1 at 1st level, +2 at 2nd level, etc.) to saving throws against the charm spells and spell-like abilities of woodland creatures such as dryads and pixies. At 7th level the dark druid becomes completely immune to these effects.

Woodland Lore (3rd level): The dark druid can identify plants and animals (living or dead), distinguish pure water from impure, and pass without trace through overgrown areas at his normal rate of movement.

Create Misbegotten (6th level): A group of dark druids of suitably high level can perform a ritual that creates a number of misshapen or malformed creatures — Misbegotten creatures, a type of new monster described in Appendix E. See the sidebar for details.

Shift Form (9th level): This ability allows the dark druid to assume the form of any common woodland creature up to 3 times per day. He can assume virtually any shape up to 200% of his body weight, but in doing so sustains damage equal to 10% of his current hp (before the change) per HD of the new shape. For example, a dark druid assuming the form of a black bear (3+3 HD, so rounded up to 4 HD) would take damage equal to 40% of his current hp at the time of the change. If he had 25 hp before the change, he would have only 15 hp afterward.

The shapes actually used by the dark druids are very distinct and often coincide with the deity or force they worship, as well as their sect. There is some GM latitude here for interpreting those that are appropriate.

Dread Hierophant status (16th level): The demon lord N'Threxus limits the number of 16th- and higher-level dark druids to eight, known collectively as the Dread Hierophants. Only these eight druids have access to the highest levels of malign knowledge. There is one such dark druid of each level from 16th to 23rd, and each increase in level brings the knowledge of some terrible new power. Their abilities are left as an exercise for the GM. Hesmat the Dread Hierophant from this module offers one example: He can cast spells normally permitted only to Black Hat druids.

Create Misbegotten Ritual

Prerequisites for this ritual are:

- An outdoor area approximately 1 mile square.
- Four participating dark druids of at least 6th level each.
- Animal sacrifices for the typical types to be affected within the chosen area.
- Four days of uninterrupted chanting and invoking the powers of darkness at the chosen site.

At the culmination of this ritual a fog seeps forth from the ground and moves to encompass the area, completely doing so within 10d4 minutes of its creation. This affects those animals that were chosen as sacrifices and which are still present within the affected area; all others remain unaffected.

Creatures are affected as by a *dark breath*® or *arouse evil*® spell. Each creature becomes a Misbegotten version of itself (see the Misbegotten description in Appendix E).

If the participating dark druids are interrupted in any way during this process, the ritual concludes unsuccessfully and must be restarted. Creatures affected by this ritual cannot be changed back to their original forms except through something akin to the reverse of this ritual, though no such counter-ritual is known to exist. Creatures reassume their non-misbegotten forms upon death, pointing to the true evilness of what is at work upon them.

BLACK HAT SECT

The Black Hat sect is the original sect from which the Umber Eye druids broke away. The latter rejected the Black Hats' claim that the use of demonic and diabolical force was not necessary for destroying humankind, and that such independent powers were bent upon the destruction and distortion of nature and all humans, including them.

The Black Hats, however they may rail against their one-time associates, are now the minority, but still an evil one with a slightly more lawful approach to their evil designs for civilization.

They have launched plagues against nearby cities, formed associations of assassins which carry out their will by eliminating potentially hostile targets, and summon the distorted and highly dangerous dark forces of nature to otherwise destroy humankind wherever it is seen advancing. Their major thrusts have been against cities which are prosperous and growing, border towns which act as starting points for expansion into adjacent wild areas, and riverside communities, where their presence is particularly felt due to designs by the Black Hats' religious leader, Krohm Badin, who feels that the mere presence of civilization next to these watercourses in turn pollutes the lands touching these for miles up and down their banks.

As a whole, they are the more dangerous of the two sects, for they are organized, driven and fanatic, whereas the Umber Eye sect is the opposite in most cases. They represent the minority (20%) of dark druids in existence.

Dress: The typical dress of a Black Hat member is a black, toga-like robe and a black conical hat, squared off at the top, called a buirent.

Dark Forces of Nature / Allegiance Spells: Dark Forces of Nature represent the essence of destructive elemental forces, evil nature spirits, nature's withheld enmity towards human kind which, when provoked, manifests as unchecked hatred, and sundry other chaotic forces and types which otherwise, when summoned or released by a dark druid, are inimical to civilized life. It can equate, by way of a raw comparison, to demonic forces which are in turn chaotic, but this measure is not a full one as demons and their kin are often controllable, whereas nature in the many forms the dark druid summons is often the opposite, causing equal damage and destruction to all life.

The Black Hat sect calls upon the evil, distorted and vengeance-filled dark forces of nature to do their bidding. This manifests partially through their specific list of allegiance spells. The dark druid who attains these spells does so by secretly communing with those forces specifically related to the spell in question. Thus, for example, when learning those spells that relate to the spirit realms (e.g., creating undead) he or she calls upon the destructive spirits which have manifested in nature, etc. Once these spells are learned, they are always usable, no matter if the druid is subsequently permanently or temporarily reduced in level (i.e., by energy draining attacks, for example). These are secrets of the dark forces of nature that once learned are never forgotten. The next lowest spell slot, in extending this example, could then hold a spell of a higher level with no other penalties or requirements.

Animal Shapes: Black Hat dark druids' animal shapes are black in color, or have such highlights. If a dark druid is struck for any amount of damage while in this form, he flies into a berserk rage, giving him +2 "to hit" and damage, but a -2 penalty to AC for the duration of the combat.

Affected Animals & Plants Additional Power: Animals and plants befriended, conjured or summoned by a Black Hat member have a 5% chance per HD of temporarily draining one experience level per successful melee attack. GM discretion on how long the temporary drain lasts.

Black Hat Allegiance Spells (Dark Forces of Nature)

1st Level

Darkbranch
Frighten Animals
Nettles
Spoil Fodder

3rd Level

Awaken Dead
Contagion
Withstand Heat

5th Level

Dark Breath
Major Wounding
Rebuke Good
Wall of Black Flame

7th Level

Dark Heart
Dark Storm
Profanation
Tremor

2nd Level

Bitterberry
Minor Wounding
Vinculum
Unseelie Fire

4th Level

Brambles
Imprecation
Summon Animental

6th Level

Asylum
Black Teeth
Dark Oak
Interdict
Summon Black Flame Elemental



Umber Eye Allegiance Spells (Dark Powers)

1st Level

Frighten Animals
Rain of Sparks
Spoil Fodder
Talon Rod

3rd Level

Contagion
Darkcloak
Withstand Heat

5th Level

Arouse Evil
Entropy
Major Wounding
Monk's Pepper
Wall of Smoke

7th Level

Summon Vermin
Treebeast
Umber Rain

2nd Level

Fireberry
Minor Wounding
Phantasmagoria
Unseelie Fire

4th Level

Summon Animental

6th Level

Asylum
Evil Oak
Spores of N'Threxus
Summon Dust Elemental

UMBER EYE SECT

This sect is decisively chaotic in that they seek not to cooperate with the Black Hats and more often even with themselves. There is also a question as to whether they are more dangerous to themselves or to others, as infighting is an ongoing ordeal amongst its various splinter groups, with many grudge matches being settled at the Great Conclave of Eye which meets once per year at a preordained spot. Because of this natural confusion and self-aggrandizement, their immediate plans are hard to deduce, but their bloody resolve when acting is equally as potent as that of their counterpart's. They represent the majority (80%) of those dark druids in existence.

Dress: The typical dress of an Umber Eye sect member is a dark-gray robe, loosely fastened, and a red circlet holding a neck-length cloth of black about the head called a shad. Carved into the wood making up the front piece of the circlet is a raised, lidless gray eye.

Dark Powers / Allegiance Spells: The Umber Eye sect calls upon the powers of demons, devils, fallen gods and destructive, chaotic deities for their powers. This grouping is hereafter referred to, for matters of simplicity, as Dark Powers. There are many powers involved in feeding followers their magical energies, and they merely equate to those powers which support each separate adherent's cause. This cause may or may not have anything to do with the original philosophy of the group before it divided into two sects, and more often it does not. Instead, the Dark Powers are using misguided adherents to complete their own evil plans. GMs must assign those demons, devils, or evil gods/beings from their own campaigns which they feel would closely fit with the idea of Dark Powers.

This transferred power manifests partially through the list of Umber Eye allegiance spells. Note that the dark druid who attains these spells at first does so by petitioning the Dark Power he holds as master at the appropriate level, and then these are granted. As most of these powers are egotistical, demanding and vindictive beings, if the dark druid loses levels (i.e., by energy drain, for example), he loses the ability to choose the corresponding spell – this knowledge is taken from him by the master and he must regain the level appropriate to the spell in order to use it again.

Animal Shapes: Umber Eye dark druids assume animal shapes which are misbegotten; that is, malformed or misshaped in one or more ways. Additionally, while in these forms, successful bite attacks can cause *contagion**.

Affected Animals & Plants Additional Power: Animals and plants befriended, conjured or summoned by an Umber Eye member have a 5% chance per HD of causing *contagion**.



APPENDIX G: ALLEGIANCE SPELL DESCRIPTIONS

AROUSE EVIL

Level: 5 (Umber Eye) Components: V, S, M
Range: Touch Casting Time: 2 hours
Duration: Permanent Saving Throw: Special
Area of Effect: Creature touched

More of a ritual than a spell, *arouse evil* gives a plant or animal the awareness of a sentient creature. Once the plant or animal is aware, it becomes friendly to the caster and serves him to the best of its ability. Plants that are aroused gain both sense and mobility. Animals receive increased intelligence, and hit dice commensurate with their increased intelligence. Affected plants and animals can communicate with the caster and any other character capable of casting this spell.

The character has a base chance of successfully casting this spell equal to five times his level of ability. For example, a 10th-level Umber Eye druid has a base 50% chance of successfully casting this spell. From this number is subtracted the hit dice of the animal or plant to be affected. The same Umber Eye druid trying to cast this spell on a brown bear (5+5 HD) would have but a 45% chance of success.

Upon casting this spell, the caster temporarily loses 1d4+1 points of constitution that are gained back at the rate of one per day. The loss occurs whether or not the spell is successful.

ASYLUM

Level: 6 Components: V, S
Range: 0 Casting Time: 1 segment
Duration: Instantaneous Saving Throw: None
Area of Effect: Personal

This spell transports the dark druid, and everything he is carrying, immediately to one of his unhallowed groves (roll randomly or choose). If the spell is successful, there is no chance of error. It is normally only used when the druid is gravely threatened.

AWAKEN DEAD

Level: 3 (Black Hat) Components: V, S, M
Range: 10' Casting Time: 1 round
Duration: Permanent Saving Throw: None
Area of Effect: Special

This spell "awakens" the remains of one creature – human, humanoid, or animals – and animates it through possession by a malign woodland spirit. The resulting "undead" creature will have half the hit dice it possessed in life, as well as a dim intelligence from the spirit pressed into service. Creatures awakened by use of this spell will obey the commands of the caster to the best of their ability, and they will remain animated until destroyed.

Ordinary druids consider the "undead" to be an abomination and the use of this spell has made the Black Hats bitter enemies of the druid hierarchy.

For those interested in creating new allegiance spells, note that such a spell's casting time is generally equal to 3 segments plus 1 segment per level of the spell. For example, a 1st-level allegiance spell takes 4 segments to cast, a 2nd-level spell, 5 segments, etc. All 7th-level allegiance spells take at least 1 round to cast.

BITTERBERRY

Level: 2 (Black Hat) Components: V, S, M
Range: 10' Casting Time: 1 round
Duration: Permanent Saving Throw: None
Area of Effect: 1-10 berries

Casting this spell upon a bunch of fresh berries renders 1d10 of them magical. Any Black Hat druid can discern these berries from ordinary berries, and detection magic will cause them to radiate enchantment.

If eaten, the berries famish the eater, requiring him to eat twice the normal amount of food for a number of days equal to the number of berries ingested. For example, a character eating 3 of the berries will need to consume double rations for 3 days or become fatigued (-2 to all physical attributes). Each berry also causes 1 damage to the eater, to a maximum of 10 points of damage in any 24-hour period.

Any sort of berry is a valid material component for this spell – blueberry, blackberry, raspberry, etc.

BLACK TEETH

Level: 6 (Black Hat) Components: S, M
Range: 40' Casting Time: 1 round
Duration: Special Saving Throw: None
Area of Effect: Special

This spell causes a dense patch of black thorns to rise from the ground causing 1d6 damage to any creature within a 10' radius. Each round spent traveling through this patch causes an additional point of rending damage. The thorny patch lasts until it is destroyed, burnt, or similar.

In order to cast this spell the Black Hat druid must procure a thistle, thorn, nettle, or spine taken from a plant affected by the *dark breath** spell. The thorn or thistle (or other part) can then be hurled up to 40', at which point the thorny patch immediately sprouts from the ground.

BRAMBLES

Level: 4 (Black Hat) Components: V, S, M
Range: 80' Casting Time: 7 segments
Duration: 1 round/level Saving Throw: Special
Area of Effect: 20' radius circle

This spell causes the trees and secondary growths in the affected area to grasp and entangle those creatures within it. Anyone within the area of effect is trapped and held for the duration of the spell. In addition, affected creatures take 1d8 damage per round from the brambles and vines. Those making successful saves take damage but are not held, and can leave the area at a rate of approximately 10' per round. Those outside the area but attempting to penetrate it are subject to the same penalties, and must make a saving throw or be held by the brambles.

CONTAGION

Level: 3 Components: V, S
Range: Touch Casting Time: 6 segments
Duration: Special Saving Throw: Negates
Area of Effect: Creature touched

This spell causes a wasting disease in the target creature unless he makes a successful save vs. poison. The dark druid touches the creature (he must make a successful "to hit" roll), who then loses 1d6 points of strength, and an additional 1 point of strength for each day that the disease remains uncured. When the creature's strength attribute reaches 0, he is slain.

DARKBRANCH

Level: 1 (Black Hat) Components: V, S, M
Range: Touch Casting Time: 4 segments
Duration: 3-6 rounds Saving Throw: None
Area of Effect: Weapon touched

This spell turns the caster's staff, or club, or virtually any weapon made primarily of wood, into a magical weapon. The darkbranch appears as a black and twisted branch of wood, seemingly fragile, approximately 3' in length. It strikes as a +1 magic weapon, giving a +1 bonus on "to hit" rolls and dealing 1d8 damage. On a natural roll of 20 it deals a shattering blow, causing 1d20 damage, but in the process is destroyed.

DARK BREATH

Level: 5 (Black Hat) Components: V, S, M
Range: Touch Casting Time: 2 hours
Duration: Permanent Saving Throw: None
Area of Effect: Creature touched

With the exception of the above, this spell is identical to the Umber Eye spell *arouse evil**.

DARKCLOAK

Level: 3 (Umber Eye) Components: V, S, M
Range: 0 Casting Time: 6 segments
Duration: 6 rounds + 1 rd./lvl. Saving Throw: None
Area of Effect: Special

This spell conjures forth a cloak made of shadowstuff. The cloak can be worn by the caster or any other person to whom he gives it. When the cloak is donned, and the cowl pulled over the wearer's head, he is able to conceal himself in shadow (assuming the presence of such shadows!) or in woodland terrain with a base effectiveness of 50%. This effectiveness is increased by 3% per level of the caster, to a maximum of 95%. The spell is generally used for scouting or for making an escape.

DARK HEART

Level: 7 (Black Hat) Components: S, M
Range: 0 Casting Time: 1 round
Duration: Special Saving Throw: None
Area of Effect: One tree

This spell allows the druid to change a specially prepared totem into a huge, malignant, intelligent tree (known as a dark heart or black-hearted one). The tree from which the totem is carved must have been struck by lightning. The process by which the totem is prepared takes as many days to complete as the dark druid has levels. During this time he or she may do nothing other than concentrate on completing the preparation ritual.

When the spell is actually cast and the totem changed into the dark heart, there is a chance that it will be uncontrollable. The dark druid must roll less than or equal to his wisdom on 1d20 in order to right the dark heart's chaotic nature and command it. Failure releases it from any subsequent control and it becomes a free-willed entity that either attacks the dark druid (50% chance) or wanders until it is slain.

If the dark heart is killed, it reverts to its totem form; but three days must pass before it can be turned into a dark heart again. Each time this is done, the caster must roll to see if the dark heart can be controlled. The dark heart has the statistics and capabilities of a 12 HD treant, but with chaotic evil alignment.

DARK OAK

Level: 6 (Black Hat) Components: V, S
Range: 30' Casting Time: 1 hour
Duration: 1 day/level Saving Throw: None
Area of Effect: One tree

This spell "awakens" or "rouses" an oak tree and forces it to serve as a guardian of the caster, his sacred grove, or any other area determined by him. The spell lasts twice as long as normal if the caster or his grove is to be guarded.

The tree will attack those who approach the guarded area if they are inimical to the caster, or, if they are friendly to the caster, if they do not use the two-word pass phrase indicated by the caster when preparing the spell.

The dark oak has combat stats equivalent to a 10 HD treant with 60 hp.

DARK STORM

Level: 7 (Black Hat) Components: V, S, M
Range: 150' Casting Time: 1 round
Duration: 1 round and special Saving Throw: ½
Area of Effect: 100 cu. ft./level

This appears as a burning cloud of black and yellow flame. Creatures caught within the volume of the cloud suffer an immediate 4d4 damage, plus 1 damage for each level of the caster. In addition, the victims suffer 1d4 damage per round for 1d4+1 rounds afterward, which can only be extinguished through the normal passage of time or by a spell designed to abjure magical and/or evil effects. None of the usual means of putting out normal fires have any effect at all against the *dark storm*. Note that this spell is a product of warped nature and will even affect creatures normally resistant to fire, but at 50% normal damage.



ENTROPY

Level: 5 (Umber Eye) Components: V, S, M
Range: 80' Casting Time: 8 segments
Duration: 1 round/level Saving Throw: Special
Area of Effect: 20' radius circle (approx. 1250 sq. ft.)

By means of this spell, the caster temporarily turns the ethical outlook or alignment of the designated creatures in the affected area to one of a wholly chaotic nature. The targets become so completely chaotic that they may even lose their free will. Each target must make a save vs. magic for every round the spell lasts or act randomly according to the following table:

Die Roll (d4)	Action
1	Run away for the duration of the spell (unless held, hindered, or slain)
2	Wander aimlessly, taking no notice of attacks directed at him
3	Attack nearest creature, whether he be friend or foe
4	Try to perform some action more proper to some other character class (e.g., a magic-user might run headlong into battle; a thief might try to cast a spell; a cleric might try to pick someone's pockets; etc.). The GM has total discretion here.

EVIL OAK

Level: 6 (Umber Eye)
Range: 30'
Duration: 1 day/level
Area of Effect: One tree

Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 hour
Saving Throw: None

This spell "awakens" or "rouses" an oak tree and forces it to serve as a guardian of the caster, his sacred grove, or any other area determined by him. The spell lasts twice as long as normal if the caster or his grove is to be guarded.

The tree will attack those who approach the guarded area if they are inimical to the caster, or, if they are friendly to the caster, if they do not use the two-word pass phrase indicated by the caster when preparing the spell.

The evil oak has the combat stats of a 10 HD treant with 50 hp and a 15" movement rate.

FIREBERRY

Level: 2 (Umber Eye)
Range: 10'
Duration: Permanent
Area of Effect: 2-8 berries

Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 round
Saving Throw: None

This spell, known to the Umber Eye sect of druids, is similar to *bitterberry**, except that 2d4 berries are affected and they can only be discerned by an Umber Eye druid or detection magic. Each berry ingested causes 1d4 damage to the eater, to a maximum of 20 points of damage in a 24-hour period. The damage is done to the eater's internal organs and can only be healed through magical means. If thrown, each berry causes 1d2 damage to all within a 10' radius of the impact.

Only berries that are naturally red in color – cranberries, raspberries, wild strawberries, etc. – can be utilized for this spell.

FRIGHTEN ANIMALS

Level: 1
Range: 10'
Duration: 1 turn/level
Area of Effect: One animal

Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 4 segments
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell triggers the base fear and defense instincts of all animals within 10', causing them to react strongly toward other sorts of creatures in the vicinity, unless they save vs. magic. Predators attack viciously, as if defending their territory or young, as do any non-predators possessing a suitable attack form. In addition, if an affected animal is currently under the effect of an *animal friendship* spell, this spell has a chance of terminating that bond of friendship, as per *dispel magic*. This spell is often used in conjunction with *invisibility to animals*.

IMPRECATION

Level: 4 (Black Hat)
Range: Touch
Duration: Special
Area of Effect: Creature touched

Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 segment
Saving Throw: Negates

Upon casting this spell, the caster pronounces some sort of curse on the creature touched. The curse can cause a -3 penalty to any attribute (the GM can roll randomly or simply choose), a -4 penalty on "to hit" rolls, a -4 penalty to AC, or some other similar effect. The caster should be encouraged to devise a curse of his own, similar in power to the examples listed above. The imprecation is permanent until it is removed by benediction magic of an equal or higher level.

INTERDICT

Level: 6 (Black Hat)
Range: Special
Duration: Permanent
Area of Effect: 20' cube/level (8,000 cu. ft./level)

Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 6 hours
Saving Throw: Special

This spell consecrates (or desecrates as the case may be) and seals an area designated by the caster. Both physical and magical means (teleportation, the Ethereal Plane, etc.) of entering the interdicted area are hindered. Any creature attempting to enter the area must make a save vs. magic or be repelled – save for those of an ethical outlook or alignment identical to the caster's or those whom he has named in the process of casting the spell. All others take damage whether or not they were successful in entering the area, and continue to take damage for as long as they remain in it. Of course the *interdict* is still subject to *dispel magic*.

Those of an ethical outlook or alignment inimical to that of the caster suffer the following effects:

- 2d6 damage upon entering the interdicted area (no save)
- 1d6 damage per round as long as they remain in the area (no save)
- Spell effects of 4th or greater level will fail unless a successful save vs. magic is made. A new save must be made for each spell attempt. Spell failure is treated as if the caster were struck by a weapon in the course of casting the spell.

The use of magical abilities related to character class (such as druidical abilities) is unimpeded.

MAJOR WOUNDING

Level: 5
Range: Touch
Duration: Special
Area of Effect: Creature touched

Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 8 segments
Saving Throw: None

This spell causes 5d4+5 damage to the creature touched (a successful "to hit" roll is required). The damage caused can only be healed by magical effects of 4th or greater level.



MINOR WOUNDING

Level: 2
Range: Touch
Duration: Special
Area of Effect: Creature touched

Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 5 segments
Saving Throw: None

This spell causes 2d4+2 damage to the creature touched (a successful "to hit" roll is required). The damage caused can only be healed by magic.



MONK'S PEPPER

Level: 5 (Umber Eye) Components: S
Range: Touch Casting Time: 1 round
Duration: Permanent Saving Throw: None and special
Area of Effect: Tree touched and special

This spell is used on the fruit of the chastity tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*). The caster need only touch the tree. All of the berries on the tree (but not the tree itself) are affected. The berries are then dried and ground into a coarse powder, which is used by the Umber Eye druids as a seasoning in their food. When used in this way it has a taste similar to that of black pepper and its chief effect is to depress the libido. This is the berries' natural effect. Continued use of the pepper in this form has a tendency to confirm one's will in evil.

Player characters are unaffected by using the pepper in small quantities; however, the GM has the option of imposing penalties on player characters who make regular use of it (especially if they are priests or holy warriors).

The pepper also has another use. A pinch of it can be blown to make a small cloud affecting a single foe (who can save to avoid breathing the powder). If the powder is inhaled, it causes uncontrollable sneezing and choking for 5 rounds (-4 "to hit" and damage).

NETTLES

Level: 1 (Black Hat) Components: V, S, M
Range: 60' Casting Time: 4 segments
Duration: 6 rounds Saving Throw: Negates
Area of Effect: Up to four creatures in a 50' cube

This spell afflicts enemies of the caster with an irresistible itching in their arms and legs, giving each a penalty of -2 to all "to hit" rolls and -2 to morale for the duration of the spell. A save vs. magic at a -2 penalty negates this effect.

PHANTASMAGORIA

Level: 2 (Umber Eye) Components: V, S, M
Range: 80' Casting Time: 5 segments
Duration: Special Saving Throw: Special
Area of Effect: 20' radius circle (approx. 1250 sq. ft.)

When an Umber Eye druid casts this spell, he creates an illusionary monster capable of affecting all who see it and believe in it (disbelief is only possible if the character in question makes a successful saving throw). Any creature of equal or lesser hit dice than the caster can be created as long as it fits within the area of effect.

If the illusion is attacked and struck by an opponent (consider the illusion to have AC 2), it will appear to those viewing it to shrink, and they will gain another saving throw to disbelieve at a +2 bonus. The illusion disappears once it has been struck four times.

PROFANATION

Level: 7 (Black Hat) Components: V
Range: 0 Casting Time: 1 segment
Duration: 1 round/level Saving Throw: Special
Area of Effect: All good creatures within 20' of the caster

With this spell the Black Hat druid speaks a word of the purest blasphemy. Good aligned creatures within the area of effect are affected as follows:

Type / Level / Hit Dice	Effect
Other-planar creatures	Driven back to plane of origin
2 or fewer levels/hit dice	Death
3 to 6	Paralysis
7 to 10	Stunned: Move at 50%; -4 "to hit"
11+	Deafness: Move at 75%; -2 "to hit"; 50% chance of spell failure

Only characters/creatures of 15th level (or hit dice) and above are permitted a saving throw against this spell.

RAIN OF SPARKS

Level: 1 (Umber Eye) Components: V, S, M
Range: 40' Casting Time: 4 segments
Duration: Instantaneous Saving Throw: 1/2
Area of Effect: 10' radius circle (approx. 300 sq. ft.)

This spell causes many sparks to fall within the affected area. Each creature within the area is struck by a number sparks equal to the caster's level, each of which causes 1d4-1 electrical damage. A successful saving throw results in only half damage being taken.

REBUKE GOOD

Level: 5 (Black Hat) Components: V, S, M
Range: 80' Casting Time: 8 segments
Duration: Instantaneous Saving Throw: Special
Area of Effect: 30' radius circle (approx. 2,800 sq. ft.)

This spell causes a "good" effect to be dispelled, such as the summoning of an ethically good creature, or a summoning or enchantment performed by a caster with a good ethical outlook or alignment. Summoned creatures are permitted a saving throw to determine if they are affected. Summonings and enchantments are also permitted a saving throw as if the caster himself were making it, but at a -2 penalty.

SPOIL FODDER

Level: 1 Components: V, S
Range: 20' Casting Time: 1 round
Duration: Permanent Saving Throw: None
Area of Effect: 1 cu. ft./level

This spell contaminates all food and water within the area of effect. When cast by a member of the Black Hat sect, the food and water is simply contaminated and (if applicable) putrefied; when cast by a member of the Umber Eye sect, it continues to appear unspoiled but in fact becomes a mild poison (save or lose 1d6 points of constitution, which returns at the rate of one point per day).



SPORES OF N'THREXUS

Level: 6 (Umber Eye) Components: V, S, M
Range: 80' Casting Time: 9 segments
Duration: Special Saving Throw: Special
Area of Effect: Special

Up to 3 pebble-sized spores may be hurled up to 80', each requiring a successful "to hit" roll. Each causes 1d8 toxic damage on impact, and further causes the target to contract the same wasting disease delivered by the *contagion** spell: Strength is reduced by 1d6 points initially, and by 1 additional point per day that it remains uncured. When the infected character's strength score reaches 0, he is slain. A successful save vs. poison reduces the toxic damage by ½, and completely negates the disease.

The spores used in this spell must be harvested from a plant which has been affected by the *arouse evil** spell.

SUMMON ANIMENTAL

Level: 4 Components: V, S, M
Range: 80' Casting Time: 7 segments
Duration: 6 rounds/level Saving Throw: None
Area of Effect: Special

This spell allows the caster to summon a creature from an elemental realm (the Realm of Fire for the Black Hats, the Realm of Earth for the Umber Eyes) and force it to serve in animal form. Summoned animals always appear misbegotten, and have all of the powers and abilities of similar misbegotten animals (for example, a lion animal has all of the abilities of a misbegotten lion). The dark druid can choose what sort of animal is summoned (giant toad, brown bear, house cat, etc.), though it can have no more hit dice than he has levels, and he has no control over its misbegotten features (these can be determined randomly or chosen by the GM). Fire animalals cause 1d4 additional fire damage on a successful melee attack, while earth animalals gain a +2 bonus to AC due to the density of their "flesh." In all other respects they are identical to their Prime Material Plane counterparts.

SUMMON BLACK FLAME ELEMENTAL

Level: 6 (Black Hat) Components: V, S, M
Range: 80' Casting Time: 6 rounds
Duration: 1 turn/level Saving Throw: None
Area of Effect: Special

This spell opens a portal to the Realm of Fire and summons an elemental creature from the region of that realm which borders the Realm of Entropy. Here the elemental fire is black and radiates cold instead of heat. The elemental serves the dark druid willingly, if apathetically. The summoned elemental has the same capabilities and statistics as a regular fire elemental, except that it attacks twice per round, and deals 1 less point of damage against cold-using opponents. The summoned elemental's hit dice and damage are determined as follows:

Die Roll	HD	Damage
01-10	8	2d6
11-70	12	2d10
71-95	16	4d6
96-00	Special	Special

A roll of 96-100 indicates that a special creature is summoned in place of the elemental, such as a black flame efreeti.

This spell can be cast only once per day.



SUMMON DUST ELEMENTAL

Level: 6 (Umber Eye) Components: V, S, M
Range: 80' Casting Time: 6 rounds
Duration: 1 turn/level Saving Throw: None
Area of Effect: Special

This spell opens a portal to the Realm of Earth and summons an elemental creature from the region of that realm which borders the Realm of Entropy. The elemental serves the dark druid willingly, if apathetically. The summoned elemental has the same capabilities and statistics as a regular earth elemental, except that it attacks twice per round, and each successful attack causes choking (-2 "to hit" and damage) in the target creature unless he makes a successful save vs. poison. The summoned elemental's hit dice, damage, and adjustment to its targets' saves against choking are determined as follows:

Die Roll	HD	Damage	Saving Throw Adjustment
01-10	8	2d6	—
11-70	12	2d10	-2
71-95	16	4d6	-4
96-00	20+1d4	4d10	-6

This spell can be cast only once per day.

SUMMON VERMIN

Level: 7 (Umber Eye) Components: V, S, M
Range: 80' Casting Time: 1 round
Duration: 1 round/level Saving Throw: Special
Area of Effect: 20 sq. ft.

This spell calls forth a host of scavenging creatures — ticks, giant ants, dung beetles, and the like — filling an area up to 20 sq. ft. The swarm moves at a rate of 10' per round at the command of the caster, and will attack any prey within 200'. Creatures caught within the swarm take 20 damage immediately and 20 additional damage for each round they remain in it. Victims can leave the swarm in one round, but a successful save vs. magic is required.

TALON ROD

Level: 1 (Umber Eye) Components: V, S, M
Range: Touch Casting Time: 4 segments
Duration: 2-8 rounds Saving Throw: None
Area of Effect: Weapon touched

This spell turns the caster's staff, or club, or virtually any weapon made primarily of wood, into a magical weapon. The talon rod appears as a 3'-long shaft topped with a taloned hand. It strikes as a +1 magic weapon, giving a +1 bonus on "to hit" rolls and dealing 1d10 damage.

TREEBEAST

Level: 7 (Umber Eye)
Range: 0
Duration: Special
Area of Effect: One tree

Components: S, M
Casting Time: 1 round
Saving Throw: None

This spell is similar to *dark heart**, except that the tree from which the staff is prepared must be an evershade tree, which grows only in the deepest dales of the forest, and it need not have been struck by lightning. The tree beast's trunk is black and thick and its facial features appear as the creature named by the dark druid as he or she creates the tree beast – always a forest creature malformed as by a Create Misbegotten ritual. The tree beast gains additional sensory enhancements or limitations, if any, of the creature named, but not additional attacks (such as bite attacks) or abilities, as the transformation is largely cosmetic.

The tree beast has the statistics and capabilities of a 12 HD treant, but with AC -2 (from a thicker trunk) and chaotic evil alignment.

TREMOR

Level: 7 (Black Hat)
Range: 200' + 20'/level
Duration: Instantaneous
Area of Effect: 5' radius/level

Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 round
Saving Throw: Special

This spell causes a strong tremor to ripple through the affected area – a circle with a diameter of 5' per level of the caster. Buildings will sustain structural damage (at the discretion of the GM), tunnels will cave in, and trees may be uprooted (roll 1d6: 1 or 2 indicates uprooting). In addition, cracks can form in solid ground, and creatures in the immediate area of these cracks must make a saving throw or fall in and perish. Other effects may follow as determined by the GM.

UMBER RAIN

Level: 7 (Umber Eye)
Range: 150'
Duration: 1 round and special
Area of Effect: 100 cu. ft./level

Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 round
Saving Throw: ½

Similar to *dark storm**, except that the cloud appears as a hellish grey-black with red highlights.

UNSEELIE FIRE

Level: 2
Range: 90'
Duration: 3 rounds/level
Area of Effect: One creature/level

Components: V
Casting Time: 5 segments
Saving Throw: None

By means of this spell, the caster causes the bodies of the target creatures (up to a total of 1 per level of the caster) to become outlined in a blackish flame. The choice of targets is entirely up to the caster. Affected creatures are more difficult to strike in battle; in dusk or darkness they gain a +2 bonus to AC, or in better lighting a +1 bonus to AC. Only corporeal and solid creatures are affected by this spell.



VINCULUM

Level: 2 (Black Hat)
Range: Touch
Duration: Permanent
Area of Effect: Vines touched

Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 5 segments
Saving Throw: None

This spell allows the caster to turn ordinary vines, even of the garden variety, into a chain as strong as one made from thick steel links. Enough chain is produced to hold two characters fast. Characters held by the *vinculum* chain have a chance to break free equal to 1% per point of strength plus 1% per hit die. For example, a 7th-level fighter character with a strength score of 17 would have a 24% chance of breaking free of the *vinculum*.

WALL OF BLACK FLAME

Level: 5 (Black Hat)
Range: 80'
Duration: Special
Area of Effect: Special

Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 8 segments
Saving Throw: None

This spell conjures a roaring, yet heatless, wall of black flame, faintly outlined in yellow. The wall can be up to 20' square per level of the caster, and need not be straight. In any case, the wall must be parallel to the caster – that is, if the caster is standing on the ground, the wall cannot be made parallel to the ground. The side of the wall opposite the caster sends out waves of cold, inflicting 2d4 damage per round to all creatures within 10', and 1d4 damage to those within 20'. Any creature actually passing through the wall suffers 1d4 cold damage per round (for a number of rounds equal to the level of the caster) as the black flame ignites his gear. Creatures especially vulnerable to cold suffer double damage from the wall in all instances; undead, however, are unaffected. The spell lasts as long as the druid concentrates and an additional round per level of the druid once concentration is broken.

WALL OF SMOKE

Level: 5 (Umber Eye)
Range: 80'
Duration: Special
Area of Effect: Special

Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 8 segments
Saving Throw: Special

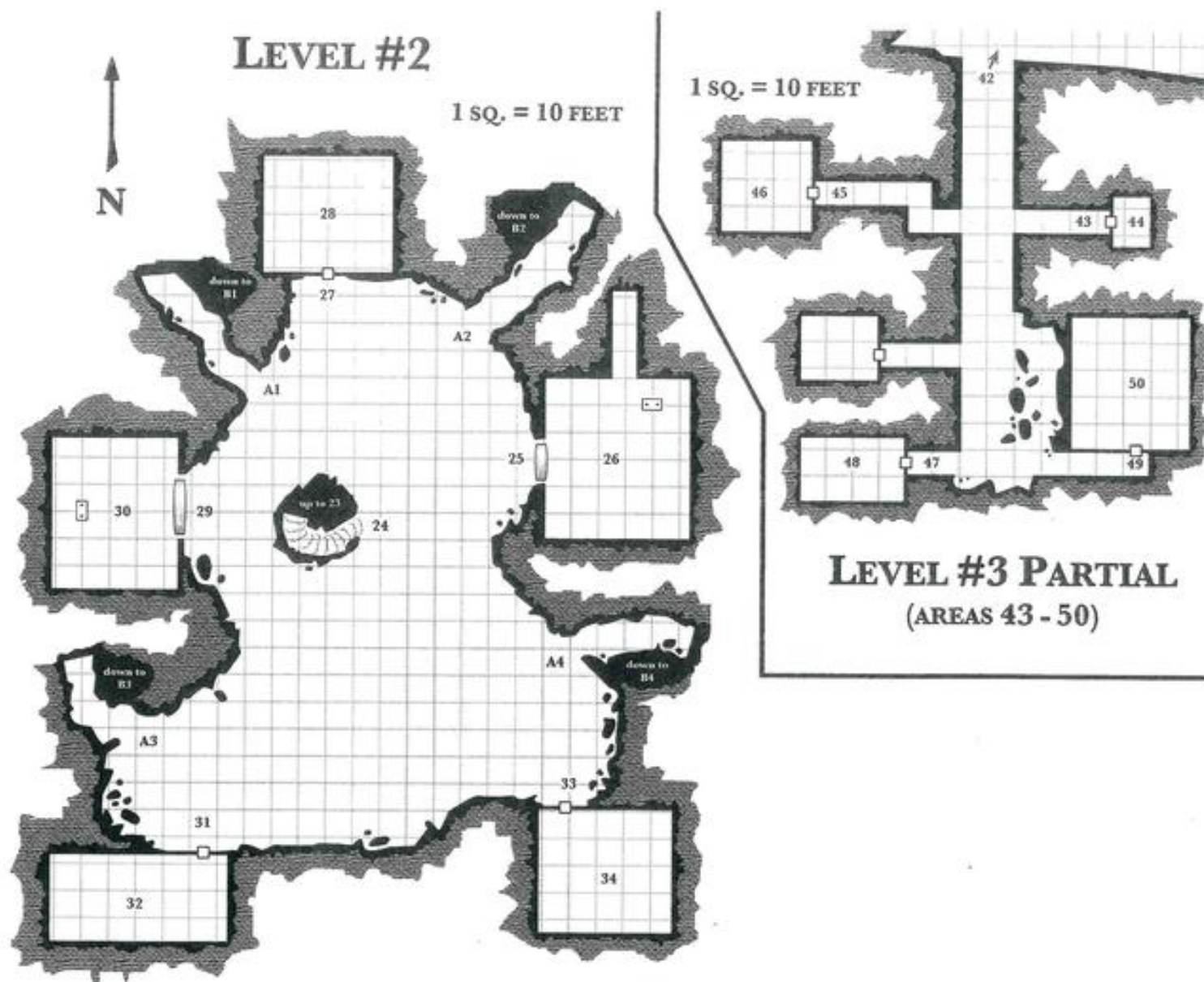
This spell is similar to *wall of black flame**, except the wall is of smoke instead of black fire, and heat damage is caused instead of cold damage. The wall of smoke does not ignite gear, but anyone passing through the wall must make a save vs. magic or suffer 1d20 choking damage.

WITHSTAND HEAT

Level: 3
Range: Touch
Duration: 1 day
Area of Effect: Creature touched

Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 6 segments
Saving Throw: None

This spell grants the target creature a +2 bonus to all saving throws against fire- or heat-related effects. It furthermore reduces any damage taken by 50%, and the first 0-9 (1d10-1) points of damage are always ignored. For example, Barth the fighter is a target of this spell. A red dragon breathes on him, causing 36 points of damage. Barth rolls 1d10-1 to see how much damage is ignored. The result is 8, leaving Barth to take only 28 points of damage. But this number is cut in half, and Barth sustains only 14 damage from the dragon's breath. If Barth makes a successful save against the dragon's breath, he would take a mere 7 damage.



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